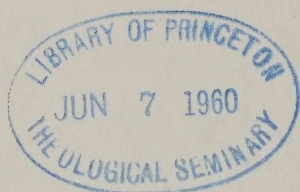


THEORIES OF KNOWLEDGE

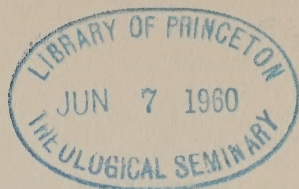


REGINALD F. O'NEILL, S. J.



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THEORIES
OF KNOWLEDGE



THEORIES OF KNOWLEDGE

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REGINALD F. O'NEILL, S.J.
Weston College, Weston, Massachusetts

ENGLEWOOD CLIFFS, N. J.
PRENTICE-HALL, INC. 1960

Imprimi Potest

James E. Coleran, S.J.
Provincial, New England Province

Nihil Obstat

Russell J. Collins
Diocesan Censor

Imprimatur

† Richard Cardinal Cushing
Archbishop of Boston

August 24, 1959

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Printed in the United States of America

91317

PREFACE

This book presents an introductory study of human knowledge which is positive rather than polemical in its approach, adequate both in the number of topics discussed and in the individual analyses, and indicative of the richness of the content of a philosophical Realism.

All too often a realistic theory of knowledge has been developed by the negative technique of setting up "adversaries" to be refuted; this procedure has amounted to saying that since this or that theory is wrong, its opposite is right and should be accepted. Here that polemical approach has been avoided by the simple device of dividing the book into two distinct but interrelated parts.

Part One presents an integrated and carefully developed analysis of a realistic explanation of the human capacity for truth and of the various elements and sources of knowledge.

Part Two studies, analyzes, and evaluates other theories which have been proposed. Obviously, in any such study a comprehensive consideration of each theory is impossible; rather, the main themes have been selected and analyzed and an effort made to understand what each theory sought to accomplish, what contribution it made, and where it was inadequate.

Hence, it can be seen that Part Two is not meant to be a history of philosophy. In fact, the presentation of topics parallels as much as possible the problems considered in Part One, instead of following a strictly chronological order.

This division of the book allows for great flexibility in handling the subject matter. Some may want to study the chapters in the order they appear. Others may prefer to treat simultaneously the correlated chapters of both parts. Still others may use either portions or all of Part Two as supplementary reading.

The lists of suggested readings and the selected bibliography at the back of the book should prove helpful as a starting point for anyone interested in further study.

If the work appears a bit difficult, it should be remembered that the subject matter itself is not easy, and a book which oversimplifies and dilutes the necessary analyses may conceivably do more harm than good: it can leave the student convinced of the inadequacy of a realistic theory of knowledge, rather than lead him to the realization that Realism is in no wise synonymous with the naive or the simple.

Finally, I wish to acknowledge my indebtedness, particularly in the composition of the first part of this book, to the writings of Reverend Francis Morandini, S.J., Gregorian University. I also want to express my appreciation and gratitude to my fellow professors and to my students at Weston College, and in a special way to Reverend John D. Donoghue, S.J. of Fairfield University for the inspiration and assistance I received from them.

—REGINALD F. O'NEILL, S.J.

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INTRODUCTION

Presupposing that the student has some generic notion of what philosophy in general aims at accomplishing with respect to being, God, man, and the world, we can immediately assert that the fundamental subject matter to be considered in this book is human knowledge and its relation to things known.

In traditional terminology, then, we can say that:

The *material object* is human knowledge.

The *formal object* is the truth or reliability of human knowledge.

METHOD OF APPROACH

Open-Mindedness. Although the aim of this guide is to lead the student to an explication of much that he now takes for granted, and more specifically, to an admission of the validity of that philosophical position which can be called "Realism," at the beginning the only demand made is that he approach the subject with honesty, openness, and a readiness to admit what the facts of the case themselves demand. Therefore, he will not explicitly opt for Realism or Idealism, for Subjectivism or Objectivism, for Relativism or Absolutism; nor will he prejudge the issue by choosing to begin with a deliberate and positive doubt either about his personal capacity for truth or about the reliability of his prephilosophic intellectual experiences.

An honest, open-minded approach will in no wise prejudge the issue, nor render it impossible to respond to what presents itself as factual; nor will it render the finding of an explicit answer logically inconsistent. What is basically needed is fairness, not naiveté, nor arbitrary assumptions.

No Material Measurement. The *special difficulty* encountered in this study is that, unlike any other matter, what is to be considered here cannot be placed before one for measurement and dissection. In most of the empirical sciences, the matter to be examined can be spread out right before the investigator, and he proceeds to apply the appropriate techniques. Obviously in dealing with knowledge as such, this is not possible.

The Fact of Judging. Hence, all that is asked at the beginning of this study is that the student be willing to start with the only "matter" available for him to work on—*acts of knowledge*. Each one is well aware that he makes acts which he admits to be knowing acts, and these are called *judgments*.

The only procedure open to us, then, is to accept this fact (that we make judgments), and to analyze any concrete act of judgment for its implications with respect to the validity of human knowledge.

Such procedure must, then, be personal, reflective, descriptive, and evaluative. Its results should be a systematic, coordinated, and verified theory of knowledge.

Hence:

Our *problem* concerns human knowledge in respect to its truth value.

Our *aim* is a systematic theory of knowledge.

Our *procedure* will be to analyze a concrete act of knowledge or concrete acts of knowledge to see what such acts reveal about the mind's ability to know reality truthfully.

Other theories of knowledge will be discussed later on (in Part Two), and their strong and weak points indicated. These latter studies should bring about a better understanding of the basic positions taken by "Realism" as well as indicate the complexity of this problem of human knowledge and the special care and open-mindedness so necessary if one is to arrive at a truly balanced theory.

Two things must be kept in mind from the start:

(1) *Identity and Diversity.* It is *human* knowledge which we are trying to explain; hence all the factors which actually figure in human knowledge must be finally admitted. The concrete data of one's own experience is present to him, and a valid theory must take all these data into account. To reject some aspect or other, or to explain it away rather than to explain it, and that because of

some preconceived assumption, cannot result in the balance needed in this matter. Many schools, as we shall see in Part Two, oversimplify by the simple process of neglecting to consider or by denying some of the data relevant to the human experience of knowing.

For example, a distinction must be made between *pointing out* the fact that human knowledge seems to demand both an identity and a diversity between knower and known, and *explaining* how both characteristics can be simultaneously present or how they can be reconciled. Whatever the explanation, the fact is clear that when I say that *I know something*, the experience includes a *subject* and an *object** known, and these are experienced as *diverse* and as two different terms of a relational act. The "I" is clearly distinguished from the "something" known; were they totally identical there would be no ground for the experience. The experience is not that of an act knowing itself, but of a knower who, by an act of knowledge, knows an "other-than-himself."

However, at the same time it must be admitted that were the object totally *other*, and were it to remain totally "outside" the act of knowledge and the knower, there could not be any knowledge present at all. Somehow what is known must enter and become one with the knower, which is to say that *identity* of knower and known is also necessarily involved in the act of knowing.

Various theories of knowledge have sought in various ways to reconcile these apparently clashing characteristics. (1) Some have denied the diversity and insisted on the total homogeneity of knower and known. (2) Others have denied identity, and so considered the two terms as irreducibly different from each other. (3) Still others have distinguished and found identity in one order of being and diversity in another order. These three views are mentioned here merely by way of illustration; as our study proceeds they will receive more careful consideration.

(2) *Relation to Metaphysics.* Despite some serious efforts to isolate Epistemology completely from Metaphysics, it will gradually become clear that the analysis of the knowing act cannot be completely divorced from an attitude toward "being" itself. Hence, while emphasis is to be placed on knowledge itself, the

* Throughout this work the term "object" is used as synonymous with "thing." The same word is often used technically in philosophy to signify something slightly, but importantly, different.

relation of this study to a general Metaphysics will inevitably become manifest.

One illustration of this relationship which might be offered has to do with the nature of man. Thus if I hold that the object known is totally intramental and that the only thing which I immediately know is an idea, my view of man's nature will be quite different from that held if I maintain that "outside" things are immediately known. In the first case the experienced "self" would be said to be a mind, somehow (maybe) linked to a body, and "body" and "soul" might be considered two separate and quite distinct beings. In the second case, the self would be said to be only one being in which mind and body not only work somehow as a unity, but also are not really two in any ordinary sense; they must constitute a special sort of composite unity. So a theory of knowledge can imply the position that man is just "mind" with an illusion of a body; or that he is just body having no "superior" principle; or that he is a unique "unity" of both mind and matter, the total being only one being; or finally that he is really two distinct and separate beings somehow contingently united.

Part One

A REALISTIC THEORY
OF KNOWLEDGE

Carefully analyzing what the fact of making judgments means, I find that I know some definite underlying truths (Chapter One), and that I simultaneously know my capacity for truth (Chapter Two). Further reflection on this procedure shows that such positive analyses of concrete acts of judgment provide a successful way to approach the question of my capacity for truth (Chapter Three).

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Through Three

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A GENERAL ANALYSIS OF JUDGMENT

I • THE SITUATION

From Acts to Potency. We have already stated that in this matter it will be necessary to proceed by analyzing concrete acts of knowledge to see what they reveal in respect to the capacity for truth, and what we hope to show early and incontrovertibly is that I do actually know certain truths. Once this is recognized, the admission of my capacity for truth becomes an easy step to make. Just as I can say that a certain man has the ability to paint, if I see him actually painting, or say that John has the ability to play the piano, if I see and hear him actually playing the piano, so, too, if I do actually have veridical knowledge, then I must admit the ability or capacity or potency to know truth. In this matter, one incontrovertible instance is actually sufficient.

Precise Content Not Important. Again, if I wish to proceed to a valid theory of knowledge, I must start with what is accessible to me; hence, I must take as my datum some act of knowing proper to myself; or in other words, the only thing I need to "presuppose" is one or other of my own acts of judging. It may be as common as the judgment that "this house is red," or "the book on the table is huge," or "that apple is tasty." What we are after cannot, at this point, be concerned precisely with the particular content of the judgment selected. Moreover, it is with an act of judgment that

we must begin, since, as will be seen in Chapter Nine, the problem of truth or falsity does not arise in regard to the act of simple apprehension.

II • THE ANALYSIS

(a) *Seek Meaning of "To Judge."* I have made a judgment, what is generally admitted to be a concrete act of human knowledge.

Now I must ask myself what that really *means*—not just in the sense that I have said that the house is red or the apple tasty, and so forth, but in the sense of finding out if any such act of judging really *means* something much more profound.

(b) *I Say Something about Something.* Every time that I intellectually judge as above, the absolute minimum that is implied in the very act of my judging is that *I am saying something about something*. Hence, even if what I explicitly say in the judgment happens to be "false," still the very making of the judgment implies that minimum. If that were not true, the function of judging would be totally inexplicable or even pernicious.

In other words, the natural and spontaneous inclination of myself to judge involves more than the mere assertion that certain characteristics are found in some object or other, for it indicates also that I recognize and by my very act admit that I can say something about something.

(c) *Three Truths Grasped.* Reflecting upon and analyzing this minimum more carefully, I come to see that there are three elements of the act of knowing which can be further elucidated:

(1) *Judgment is about something.* Whether what is judged is an act of intellect or of will, of internal or of external sensation, in any case it is a *something other* than my present act which is in question. Even the admission of error indicates this, for by admitting the possibility of error I admit the need of conforming to *what is*. Hence the minimum involved here is that a judgment involves a *being*, existing in some manner or other, as that about which my judgment is concerned. In that sense the *truth of being* is inevitably grasped in every judgment.

(2) *Something determinate is said.* I make any explicit predica-

tion only because more radically I recognize and admit that whatever is is what it is, exists in a determinate way, and cannot simultaneously not be as it is. Whether the particular object judged actually is as it is explicitly judged to be or not, the only explanation of my making any assertion is the natural, implicit, but formal grasp of the underlying truth that a thing cannot simultaneously be and not be, or be and not be what it is. Radically, the spontaneous grasp of this truth is why I judge, why I distinguish between "truth" and "falsehood," and why a sceptical attitude ever attracted philosophers. And this basic truth, grasped formally but implicitly in every judgment is known as the *principle of contradiction*.

- (3) *I am saying something determinate.* In this act of judging (as well as in other acts of feeling, knowing, and willing) I grasp the act or acts as modifications of myself as subject. These are *my* acts, somehow proceeding from, united in, and existing by virtue of *me*. Hence, I also implicitly yet formally know the truth of *my own existence*.

(d) *My Truth-Capacity Grasped.* In any concrete act of judgment, these are not the only underlying truths which are implicitly and formally known by me, but even these suffice for establishing the point at issue. The point is whether or not I can know truth—and that in its most general sense. The fact gathered from an analysis of any concrete act of judgment, regardless of the truth or falsity of the explicit judgment, is that the very fact of my judging is radically explained only by the recognition of three fundamental implied truths: being, my own existence, and the principle of contradiction.

Granted the knowledge of these three, which are implicitly but actually known in every concrete judgment, and without which no act of judging would ever be attempted, I must also grant that I implicitly but actually also know my capacity to know truth. In other words, since I *do* actually know some truths, I recognize that I *can* know truth. Thus I implicitly know my truth capacity in so far as I grasp it actually operating.

This does not mean, however, that I have as yet grasped the metaphysical nature of the elements involved.

III • SUMMARY OF THE ANALYSIS

(a) I am spontaneously conscious of certain acts, such as willing, knowing, feeling, and so forth, but especially I am aware of judging, that is, of saying something determinate about something. This implicitly involves knowledge of the truth of being, of my own existence, and of the principle of contradiction. Therefore, I know these truths implicitly.

(b) These are known in *every* act of judging, hence they are known prior to all proper demonstration; that is, they are *immediately* known.

(c) Since all particular truths rely on them, they are also called *fundamental* truths.

IV • THE STATEMENT IN BRIEF

I naturally know certain immediate and fundamental truths.

V • DEFINITIONS

I: a realization of myself as an experiencing subject. The same can also be said of others in so far as they possess the same faculties and abilities as I.

Know: taken in the ordinary and generally admitted sense of that activity whereby some object is made present to a subject. Knowledge is distinguished into (a) *sensitive*, whereby I attain things colored, resistant, odorous, and so forth, and (b) *intellectual*, whereby I judge and reason.

Naturally: spontaneously apprehended, as distinguished from *methodically*, which is arrived at by planned study.

Truth: taken in the general sense of a conformity between mind and object known. It is opposed to *falsity*, which means a positive difformity between mind and object.

Immediate: known without the sort of medium had in reasoning.

Fundamental: necessarily required for the knowledge of other truths.

Certain: some. I select only a few principal truths, which are:

(a) *Being*, or that which is. In knowledge it is *not nothing* but something to which my cognition is conformed.

(b) *Principle of Contradiction*: a thing cannot simultaneously be and not be.

(c) *My existence*: the reality of myself as the knowing, willing, feeling subject.

Explicit: principally and terminally known.

Implicit: involved in and known along with what is principally known.

VI • SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES

(a) If what is said above is true, it would seem that no one could ever have *doubted* these immediate truths; and yet they have actually been doubted.

REPLY: The merely *verbal* expression of doubt in these matters does not involve a real intellectual doubt. In fact, doubt itself as a state of mind is inexplicable except against the background of an implicit knowledge of these basic truths. Furthermore, it is usually in the more subtle applications to difficult problems, for example, motion and change, that issue is really taken. Finally, even a fully sceptical position is taken only because of a recognition of these truths, as will be seen later.

(b) Since scientific knowledge requires demonstration, it would seem that in order to get a truly systematic doctrine of human knowledge one should *demonstrate* the basic truths.

REPLY: No such demonstration of the basic truths is either required or possible. Demonstration means the process of arriving at true and certain conclusions from previously known true and certain premises; and it must be admitted that anything demonstrable should be demonstrated. However, the burden of our analysis has been to show that some basic truths are really known in *every* judgment, and so there cannot be any prior premises from which they can be deduced. All that need or can be done, then, in this matter is to point out explicitly and distinctly how what is self-evident manifests its own truth and is known as such by the human knower.

Involved in the second objection lies a confusion between a *postulate* and a *principle*.

A *Postulate* is a proposition whose truth one is asked to concede, although it is neither self-evident nor demonstrated.

A *Principle* is a proposition which is self-evidently true.

A *Conclusion* is a proposition which is accepted because it has been demonstrated.

THE KNOWLEDGE OF MY TRUTH-CAPACITY

I • THE SITUATION

In Chapter One the analysis indicated that I know some concrete truths, and hence have a capacity to know truth. Further consideration must now be given to the precise way in which I grasp or come to know this capacity. It has been argued that I must first know my capacity for truth before I can accept any particular truth; and that, on the other hand, I cannot know my capacity for truth except by way of the veridical acts themselves. Hence it is concluded that we are involved in an impossible situation. In fact, it must be conceded that were that true, no solution would be possible. Hence the present analysis must show what the priorities are in this matter, how I actually know this capacity for truth, and how the above dilemma is to be avoided.

II • THE ANALYSIS

(a) *Priority of Existence.* I can first recall the example of the painter in order to illustrate a point in priority. It must be admitted that if the man does not have the ability to paint, he will not actually paint. Hence, ontologically speaking, the capacity must exist prior to the act. Hence, too, in the matter of knowing truth, I must first have the capacity before I can actually know any truth.

(b) *My Knowledge of That Existence.* However, my considera-

tion is concerned with the question of how I come *to know* the existence of my capacity for truth. There are three possibilities: (1) I can first know the capacity, then the act; (2) I can first know the act, then the capacity; (3) I can come to know both of them simultaneously. To find out which of these is actually the explanation, I shall have to consider what it means to accept any judgment as certainly true.

(c) *Awareness of the Object.* Acceptance of a judgment as certain involves on my part awareness that the object known is as I judge it to be. Until I am conscious of this, there is hesitation and the fear of error, but once this awareness is present, I reject all hesitation and fear, and make the judgment. Thus the sure and firm acceptance of a truth requires my awareness that the object is as I judge it to be.

(d) *Awareness of My Own Act.* Furthermore, this awareness or consciousness means that I recognize the noetic or cognitive nature of my act of judging, since it carries with it the realization that my judgment itself is conformed to what is.

(e) *Awareness of Myself.* This means that I also know the subject of the act, since I know that the act of judging is mine.

SUMMARY: The acceptance of a judgment as certainly true cannot be made unless it is connected with the awareness that the object is known as it is, that the act is a cognoscitive one, and that the one judging is the subject of the act. These three elements together make up what is known as *complete reflection*.

(f) *Simultaneous Complete Reflection.* Having admitted, therefore, that complete reflection is an element necessarily found in the admission of any judgment as true and certain, we must next determine whether this reflection takes place prior to or concomitant with the very act of judgment. It will help our analysis to recall here that in the previous chapter we saw that there are some truths which are *immediately* known.

Now, if these are *immediately* known, it must be admitted that everything necessary for their acceptance is also *immediately* known or grasped. Since complete reflection is a necessary element (cf. *Analysis* [c], [d], [e]), it must be present in the very exercise of the act, that is, it must be present simultaneously in the act whereby the truth itself is grasped. Hence in admitting that we know some immediate truths, we also admit that we are, in one and the

same act, simultaneously aware of the three elements involved in complete reflection. By simply considering the fact that the same elements must also be found in any and every judgment which is accepted as true and certain, the extension of this fact can be made to all other judgments.

(g) *Negative Confirmation.* The same analysis can be confirmed in a negative way by considering what the situation would be if such reflection were not present implicitly in the act itself, but were to be present only in a subsequent judgment. That subsequent reflex judgment would (in the supposition) validate the previous judgment, but it itself would be in need of validation by a subsequent judgment, and so on indefinitely.

(h) *Simultaneous Knowledge of My Truth-Capacity.* All that has thus far been said can now be applied to the initial question concerning the way in which I actually know that my mind is capable of truth. This capacity of my mind is known by me only by my knowing that my mental activity is conformed to reality; and this conformity is known by me precisely through complete reflection. Hence it is because I have complete reflection that I know my capacity for truth. In other words, in every act of judgment, I am concomitantly implicitly aware of my ability to possess truth.

(i) *Objective Norm for Truth.* From what has been seen thus far, it can be stated now (leaving until later a more detailed consideration) that there must be *some objective norm* of truth. Since there is truth, there must be a norm for distinguishing it from falsity; and since truth requires my being aware of the object as it is, that norm must be some quality of the object manifesting itself.

III • SUMMARY OF THE ANALYSIS

(a) Acceptance of a judgment as true involves awareness that (1) the object is as I judge; (2) my act of knowing is conformed to the object; (3) I am the subject of the act. But these three elements constitute complete reflection. Hence acceptance of a judgment as true involves complete reflection. Cf. *Analysis* (c), (d), (e).

(b) There are some immediately known truths. As *known truths*, these require complete reflection. As *immediately known truths*, these require that reflection be also immediately present in the very act itself. Hence in some judgments complete reflection

is immediately or simultaneously present. Cf. *Analysis* (f). Moreover, if complete reflection demands a reflex judgment, the process would have to go on to infinity, and there could be no true judgment. Cf. *Analysis* (g).

(c) My intellectual capacity for truth is known, if I know that my intellectual activity is conformed to reality. But this conformity is known through complete reflection. Hence my intellectual capacity for truth is known through complete reflection. Cf. *Analysis* (h).

IV • THE STATEMENT IN BRIEF

In the very act of judging I am aware of my intellectual capacity for truth.

V • DEFINITIONS

Judging: that operation of the mind which affirms or denies the identity of some subject with some predicate. In every judgment certain truths are known explicitly and expressly (*in actu signato*), whereas others are known only implicitly because they are involved in the very exercise of the act of judging (*in actu exercito*). Complete reflection is one of the elements included in the very exercise of the act.

Reflex Judgment: one in which the affirmation or negation bears on a previous judgment, as when I say: "My judgment that 'the house is red' was false." All other judgments are called *direct* judgments.

I Am Aware: consciousness of the self knowing an object, called *complete reflection*, is found in every judgment.

Reflection: the return of the knower upon himself.

Complete Reflection: a simultaneous awareness touching the whole process of knowing, that is, the object, the act, and the subject knowing. This chapter indicates that such reflection is *natural*, since it is possessed by reason of the very nature of my cognoscitive faculty.

Truth: the conformity of intellect with thing.

Capacity For Truth: the aptitude of my mind to be conformed to reality. It can be viewed: (a) *potentially*: as conformable to reality; (b) *reduced to act*: as conformed to reality.

This chapter states that I implicitly know my capacity for truth as here and now *reduced to act*.

VI • SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES

(a) To proceed in this matter, the capacity of the mind for truth must be *presupposed*, and therefore the process is illegitimate.

REPLY: It is true that the capacity must first exist, and in that sense it is ontologically presupposed; but in the order of knowledge, that is, logically, it is simultaneously grasped.

(b) Since the ability of the mind to know truth is what is in question, it should not be asserted in the very data used to settle the question.

REPLY: When this capacity is said to be *in question*, it must be remembered that here there is no *problem* in the *strict* sense of the word. Rather the burden of the analysis has been to show that the reply is *naturally* known to all. Hence it must be said that this capacity is implicitly asserted in the data examined (being naturally known) and the function of the analysis is to render it explicitly and distinctly known.

THE QUESTION OF METHOD

I • THE SITUATION

Without having gone explicitly into a study of the metaphysical nature of the mind, of the act of cognition, or of the object known, we have already analyzed concrete acts of what is commonly and spontaneously recognized as knowledge, and we have seen that we implicitly but formally know certain truths and simultaneously know also our actuated capacity for truth. Since some have felt that the question considered should never have been raised by philosophers, and since others have proposed other methods of approach (cf. Part Two, Chapter Sixteen), it will be helpful to reconsider from those points of view what we have accomplished.

II • THE ANALYSIS

(a) *One Formulation of the "Critical Question."* Historically speaking, the critical question can be summed up somewhat as follows: "Granted that the immediate objects of my knowledge are my own ideas, is it possible or how is it possible for me to know any 'outside' or transcendent reality?" In the face of that or similar formulations Scholastic philosophers have usually insisted that the very question rests on a false supposition, and hence the critical question never should have been asked and should not now be raised.

Our previous and subsequent analyses show in effect that any such formulation of the critical question is unacceptable because it prejudices the issue and is not consistent with the data of the noetic experience.

(b) *Our Formulation of the Question.* In the present study the question which we have faced actually has had no such suppositions implied in its formulation, even though it hopes to meet and answer the points raised by modern philosophers on the question of human knowledge. What has been asked is *whether the human intellect has the capacity for truth*. This is a very simple, honest question, which implies no false suppositions and merely asks for whatever answer is offered by the facts. At the same time, it does not require the retraction of any previously known truths, nor does it in any way imply the negation of any naturally known truths.

(c) *The Need for Explicitation.* Furthermore, although we have seen that the capacity for truth is naturally known in every judgment, the question asked really needed to be raised for purposes of *explicitation*. Although our knowledge-acts are very personal to each of us, we can easily fail to recognize their implications. The difficulty is all the more pronounced because "things" easily catch our attention and occupy our interest, whereas introspection and the analysis of our internal acts is not an easy task. Hence it is important that we reflect seriously and explicitly on our acts of knowledge to find out what they mean and what they necessarily involve.

(d) *A Fundamental Question.* Again, it is the work of the philosopher to seek the fundamental explanations of things, and so in the question of human knowledge it is his work to seek the foundations of knowledge, the basic truths upon which it rests.

(e) *The Proper Method.* Since Descartes' famous *Discourse on Method*, the question of just how a theory of knowledge should be approached has been one of primary importance. Descartes' method will be considered later. For the present we can say that any reflex method, if it is to offer any possibility of success, must (1) not prejudice the issue, and (2) be fundamentally natural.

This means that deliberate choice of a method should be such that it will let the facts of the situation speak for themselves, and will not arbitrarily set up requirements which will predetermine

the answer to the question in the method chosen; that is, it must not preclude the logical possibility of a successful solution.

Secondly, since the point at issue is to determine the veridical nature of human judgment, the correct method must be somehow naturally known; that is, it should be in keeping with the nature of the intellect. Thus that method which is to be reflexively and explicitly followed in this matter must reflect the way in which the mind naturally knows its own capacity for truth.

(f) *Analysis of Judgments.* The only positive approach or method to be followed explicitly in this work will have to be the method of analysis, since demonstration is here impossible. And the only "matter" we have to analyze is a concrete act of judgment, since what is in question is human knowledge. Positively this means that, having decided to focus our attention precisely on our experienced act of *knowing*, we will not approach this with a denial of the *possibility* of truth, with a denial that things can be known *as they are*, with a denial that the act of knowing terminates in an object somehow *independent* of the act itself, or with any other preconceived determination to exclude part of the complex factors which are found in the concrete knowing situation. Rather, with open-minded honesty we should be prepared to face the experience of human knowing, with all the complexity and all the limitations that may involve, and be ready to *recognize* (not create) and to express just what is found.

To describe our knowledge *as it would be* were it divine or "angelic," to lay down conditions for knowledge which are not fulfilled in our concrete experiences, to seek to force the facts and to fit them within some *a priori* metaphysical theory, is not to explain *human knowledge* as it is, but rather to explain it away or to describe what it would be were it other than it is. This, as will be shown, has been the shortcoming of some other theories of knowledge.

(g) *Results of This Method.* This method of analyzing concrete acts of knowledge will necessarily result (as it has) in our recognizing the naturally and immediately known truths which lie at the roots of the very meaning of our making any act of judgment. That is to say, the analysis of any act of judgment will ultimately lead to answering the problem in question here by revealing the

immediate and naturally known truths involved in it. If the judgment is a mediate one, it will have to be resolved into some immediate cognition; and if it is an "artificial" one, it must be founded on "natural" cognition. Hence the solution can be found only in the discovery of some immediate and natural knowledge.

(h) *A Negative Approach.* This "critical" question can also be said to be answered by another method—negative and indirect (whereas our method has been positive and direct). This would consist in analyzing the position which denies the mind's capacity for truth, and hence denies our certain grasp of any truth. Here the analysis consists in pointing out the contradiction involved between the negative position explicitly taken and the implicit affirmation of the very fundamental truths which are denied. However, while this method appears different, it is basically the same as the one we have proposed above. It amounts to the statement that even if an act of judgment were to go so far explicitly as to deny the very possibility of truth, that judgment would nonetheless, because it states something determinate about something, implicitly affirm the same fundamental truths we have already explicated. In other words, any act of judgment, one affirming being, one offering mere conjecture or probability, or even one explicitly denying the very possibility of truth must have some determinate meaning and hence implies what it may seek explicitly to reject.

III • SUMMARY OF THE ANALYSIS

(a) The question of the intellect's capacity for truth is one which should be raised by a philosopher, since it

- (1) is a sincere question,
- (2) implies no false suppositions or arbitrary retractions of truths, and
- (3) seeks the fundamentals of human knowledge. Cf. *Analysis* (a), (b), (c), (d).

(b) The proper method must be one which open-mindedly analyzes a concrete act of judgment.

- (1) This is the only "matter" available for analysis.
- (2) If it is mediate, it must be resolved into the immediate.
- (3) If it is artificial, it must rest on the natural.

Hence the proper method will reveal the immediate and

naturally known cognition which underlies all judgment. Cf. *Analysis* (e), (f), (g).

(c) An analysis can also be made of the negation of my capacity for truth. This will reveal:

- (1) an implicit affirmation of fundamental truths, and hence
- (2) the contradictory of what is explicitly stated.

Hence this indirect or negative method can also be used to answer the "critical" question. Cf. *Analysis* (h).

IV • THE STATEMENT IN BRIEF

The critical question is a philosophical one, and the solution to it is found only by an analysis of concrete acts of judgment.

V • DEFINITIONS

Question: an interrogation as to whether or not a certain predicate is to be affirmed of a certain subject.

In the Strict Sense: when the answer is actually unknown.

In the Wide Sense: when the answer is actually implied, but explicitation is needed.

Of a True or False Supposition: insofar as it excludes or includes error in its formulation.

Philosophical or Scientific: insofar as it seeks ultimate or proximate causes.

Critical Question: an interrogation asking whether the human intellect has the capacity for truth. (This is the formulation of the question which we have actually faced and analyzed in general. Our analysis implies the rejection of the validity of what has frequently been proposed as the Critical Question. Cf. *Analysis* [a] for the latter formulation.)

Analysis: a method which distinctly explicitates what is only implicitly and confusedly known. (This is to be distinguished from the *process* of strict demonstration which uses an extrinsic middle term and results in new knowledge.)

Direct or Indirect Analysis: insofar as it proceeds positively by analyzing the data, or negatively by analyzing some false position taken.

VI • SUPPLEMENTARY NOTE

The main objection to our analysis would insist that our position is not impartial.

REPLY: True impartiality in a question as fundamental as the one we have considered would require us to study and evaluate various solutions offered, but it cannot require us to adopt an initial attitude which would render any solution logically impossible. Hence the wholesale rejection of all our previously held judgments or the entertaining of universal doubt does not mean impartiality. It represents an *a priori* position taken rather than an unprejudiced examination.

CHARACTERISTICS OF TRUTH

Reflecting on what it means to be capable of possessing truth, I find that to have consistent meaning truth must be said to be in some sense "absolute" or objective (Chapter Four), and to have real being as its object (Chapter Five).

• *Suggested Reading—Chapters Four
and Five*

Gilson, Etienne, *Being and Some Philosophers*, ch. 6, pp. 190–215. Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1949.

———, *The Unity of Philosophical Experience*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1937.

von Hildebrand, Dietrich, *The New Tower of Babel*, ch. 2, pp. 57–102. New York: P. J. Kenedy & Sons, 1953.

Plato, *Plato's Theory of Knowledge*, translated by F. M. Cornford, pp. 29–102. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, Ltd., 1951.

———, *The Dialogues of Plato*, translated by B. Jowett, vol. II, pp. 143–217, especially 153–183. New York: Random House, Inc., 1937.

Wild, John, *Introduction to Realistic Philosophy*, ch. 18, sect. 4, pp. 407–412. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1948.

Wilhelmsen, Frederick D., *Man's Knowledge of Reality*, chs. 3–4, pp. 17–41. Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1956.

TRUTH KNOWN AND THE KNOWER

I • THE SITUATION

Although all who refuse to despair over man's ability to know truth are in fundamental agreement that truth involves some sort of conformity between the mind and reality, not all are agreed on precisely what that means. Some hold that truth itself is entirely relative; others that it has an absolute character. Some find the object known to be totally intramental; others see it as having some independence of mind. Some again admit the extramentality of the object, but insist that it is not immediately grasped; others deny this. These views must be discussed in order, so that the facts of the situation may be recognized. As our first step, we shall now consider the nature of relativity only as it applies to knowledge.

II • THE ANALYSIS

(a) *Variability of My Grasp of Truth.* That an element of relativity (that is, of variability according to the knower) is characteristic of my knowledge is a fact which hardly needs any discussion. It is easily admitted that age, education, environment, and intellectual acumen all enter into my greater or lesser penetration and grasp of various truths. Thus I may know that aspirin will relieve my headache; later on, after becoming a physician or a biologist, I may know the same truth, but now I know more what

"aspirin" is, what it does, how it helps, and so forth. Relative to my education in this matter, there is now a much greater understanding of the situation.

Put another way, I can see that things are knowable in so many different ways that no one act of mine can exhaust the total intelligibility of any one of them. Hence, one man's knowledge can be more exhaustive or inclusive than another's, and at one period I may know less about an object than at another time.

(b) *Invariability As an Aspect of Truth.* The question now arises whether everything has been said on this subject or whether some note of nonrelativity is to be admitted. To answer this we must reconsider what we have already done, but from a slightly different point of view.

We have seen that any judgment necessarily involves predicating something determinate about something. That is to say, in the very act of judging there is intended a submission to *being*; there is a statement that *what is* actually *is*. Maybe *what* I say is not *all* there is, maybe what is said is a very minimal part of what there actually is; however, the very statement that *this is* or *this is such and such* indicates that my capacity for truth is synonymous with my capacity to know and to affirm *what is*, not with just what I *want* to be or what I try to make exist. It is rather a submission to *what is*. "What is" may be grasped under one or another formality, with more or less penetration, and hence with more or less comprehensiveness—but in any case the *object known* in this or that way is precisely *what is known* and affirmed.

In other words, human knowledge is not knowledge at all unless it means the affirmation of *what is* and the negation of *what is not*; it means a confrontation with being, not a partial or total creation of what is known. What is affirmed in a true judgment is precisely what is found in reality, whether it is affirmed by me or by another, at one period of my life or at another.

We can take as an example the statement, "John is here." This judgment can be made by his mother who loves him profoundly and for whom the mere mention of John can call up memories of tender and loving association. It can be made by someone who just met him for the first time and scarcely knows him. It can be made by someone who despises John. In each case, however, *what is affirmed* is true in reality: John is here. However much

or however little John may mean to me, his presence remains a "stubborn fact," unyielding in the face of varying ways in which it is grasped.

(c) *What Is Known and the Way in Which It Is Known.* It is in this sense that truth must be said to be *absolute* rather than merely *relative*. This does not mean that the object known cannot change, nor that my intellectual grasp of the object is total or exhaustive; but it does mean that *what is affirmed* in a true judgment *actually is* in reality, or *what is denied* *actually is not* in reality. In that sense *what I affirm* is not dependent on my knowledge nor on my affirmation, nor does it vary with my subjective conditions. Only the *way in which* I know things is subjectively mutable and dependent on my conditions.

(d) *Application to Some Cases.* Reflecting upon what has already been seen, we said that the principle of contradiction and my own existence are truths which I formally know in every judgment. If that statement has any significance it must mean that whether I think of it or not, hence independent of my judgment, "being is"; and "being is what it is"; and "I exist." These are *objectively true* and my knowing them does not change what is known. Hence, it is not that these are true because I say so, but rather I say so because they are objectively and factually true.

Therefore when we said in Chapter One that I have a capacity for truth, that truth must be characterized as *absolute truth* in the sense just explained.

Truth, then, has some objective stability and independence outside of the knower, even when what is known is some momentary and transitory event. My way of knowing this or that truth is mine alone, but what I know can also be known by another, so that we both know the same thing: for example, that John is a murderer, that it is raining, or that being is not non-being.

(e) *The Word "Absolute."* The word "absolute" in this context has caused much trouble, so it should be used with caution and accuracy. It means freed (*soluta*) from (*ab*) or independent of my subjective conditions. It means that truth does not vary with my subjective conditions, that it is not a creation of my mind, that it is something which I admit and to which I submit.

(f) *Negative Explanation.* Were this not the case (thus putting the explanation in a negative way), then all truth would be totally relative with respect to what is known. From this it would follow

that I could never know anything as it is, I would never have conformity with being. What is known would depend on each knower, and each one's knowledge would be so individualized and personal that no communication of it would be possible. I would have my truth, you would have yours, and he his; but no one of us would know anything as it is in itself.

(g) *Communication*. By truth, then, even in our first chapter, we meant an objective conformity of mind to what is, which makes possible communication between men and the development of common bodies of scientific knowledge or truth. Finally, it must be added that what has been seen in this chapter in no way conflicts with the statement that truth is a "relation" of conformity (cf. Chapter Nine) between the mind and the object known. For truth is a property of the judgment whereby what is enunciated is related to or "measured" by that which is known. This, however, in no way involves the relativity of *what is known*, which is discussed in the present chapter.

III • SUMMARY OF THE ANALYSIS

(a) The way in which I know is dependent on and relative to my personal situation. Cf. *Analysis (a)*.

(b) Truth, however, with respect to what is known, necessarily involves an admission of and a submission to what is, that is, to being.

(1) Thus the truth of the Principle of Contradiction or of my own existence is affirmed by me *because it is objectively so*; my affirmation does not make it true.

(2) Were this not so, anything at all could be made to be true by my mere affirmation of it.

(3) In this sense truth is said to be objective or absolute. Cf. *Analysis (b), (c), (d), (e), (f)*.

(c) Hence communication of truth is possible, and men can work cooperatively to build up bodies of scientific knowledge. Cf. *Analysis (g)*.

IV • THE STATEMENT IN BRIEF

Truth, with respect to what is known, must be said to be absolute.

V • DEFINITIONS

Truth: a conformity of the mind with an object.

What Is Known: that which is affirmed or denied of reality. This must *be* in order that my affirmation may be justified. This is what many may simultaneously know.

The Way I Know: how I grasp that which is known. In human cognition, this is admittedly limited, abstractive, and dependent on internal and external conditions.

Absolute: not dependent on subjective conditions; conformity with the object as it is in itself.

Relative Truth: dependent on subjective conditions even with respect to what is known, so that *what is* is never known as it is.

VI • SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES

(a) If the intellect were ordered to absolute truth, there would not be so many disagreements and errors in the works of philosophers.

REPLY: This objection is based upon the false notion that to be capable of absolute truth and to be incapable of error are synonymous. The human intellect can and does fail often enough to reach truth, especially in questions which are difficult. However, it must be noted that the above objection would not even be proposed were it not based on some absolute truths; for example:

- (1) The clear knowledge of the fact of error;
- (2) The clear knowledge of some fundamental truths; and
- (3) The recognition of the mind's ability to proceed logically.

Moreover, those who oppose our explanation propose their own as the objectively true one and therefore admit what we mean by absolute truth.

From the fact of error and disagreement the proper conclusions to be drawn are: (1) although truth is absolute, it is imperfectly grasped in human cognition; (2) although scientific knowledge is possible, it is not easy to acquire; (3) hence we should be careful to proceed logically, being especially careful about initial positions taken.

(b) Reality itself is in constant flux and hence cannot be known in any scientific or stable way.

REPLY: Although it is true that the things we meet are mutable, this does not mean that there is nothing in reality but pure "becoming." Nor does it mean that there is no stability in nature, since each thing is what it is at any moment, naturally operates regularly according to its being, and retains its own essential nature in accidental changes.

TRUTH AND THE KNOWN

I • THE SITUATION

Thus far the analysis has shown that I actually do know some truths, that I therefore have a capacity for truth, and that truth in this context has some stability and objectivity so that it is not subject to the whim or caprice or variability of the knower. Hence truth, so far as the content is concerned, means the intellectual submission to and acceptance of what is, or the denial of what is not. This means briefly the *objectivity of the content* of a true judgment—*what is said is what is*. This leads to the need for explicating one more element in human knowledge. At least theoretically it can be seen that with respect to the object known, to *what is*, a double possibility can be conceived. The object may be said either to exist with a purely mental existence or to exist extramentally and independently of the mind. If it exists merely intramentally, then all that exist are minds and their modifications, all extramental existence being a projection of the mind and hence an illusion; if it exists extramentally, then the apparently normal experience of man is valid, but difficulties of explanation do arise.

II • THE ANALYSIS

(a) *Apparently Conflicting Notes*. That man naturally and spontaneously experiences objects known as being other than and independent of himself is a fact admitted by all. In this sense it

is admitted that man has a native tendency to admit some doctrine of Realism. Should this realistic tendency be corrected or merely explained? It would have to be corrected, if the object known were purely intramental; on the other hand, a realistic explanation would not be easy because it would have to show just how an *independent* object can simultaneously be outside the mind in existence and inside the mind as known.

In other words, this question really has to do with one problem mentioned in the introduction. Both identity and diversity of knower and known are primary *data* in the noetic experience of man. I experience the object as *other* or diverse, and feel that I know an other-than-myself; at the same time I feel that I do know it, hence that I possess it in a very special way, that it is *present to me*, and that it somehow "enters" my mind and becomes one with it in being known. How can these be reconciled?

(b) *The Denial of Diversity.* One possible answer is to deny the validity of the experienced *diversity* aspect of knowledge. This position would mean that since knowledge is an act of the mind and an intellectual assimilation of an object, the object must be entirely proportioned to mind, that is, it must itself be mental. In this way, it is easy to explain the experience of identity between knower and known; there is an obvious proportion. As to the nature of the object, it is the same sort of being as mind itself. It is purely intramental and mind-dependent.

Hence any "realistic" tendency in man is to be corrected, because what is known is mind-existent, produced by the very act of knowing. This must be the case, since what has only mental existence must be the product of the mind.

Such an explanation, however, cannot be reconciled either with the data of human experience or with what we have already seen about truth. We shall proceed to show therefore: (1) what our previous analyses require in this matter; (2) what the data themselves demand; and (3) how this relates in a general way to the existence even of sensible reality.

(c) *Transcendence.* From previous analyses it has become clear that some transcendence (independence) is necessarily to be admitted with respect to the object of our knowledge. (This transcendence is a characteristic of the object known. A transcendent object is simply one which is not mind-produced or mind-depend-

ent, but which exists whether or not I think of it, and which is not itself changed by becoming known.) This means that at least in certain areas a basic Realism is implied in what has already been seen. Thus, for example, we have seen that the following must be admitted: (1) being is not non-being; (2) I exist; (3) truth is not totally relative. These and similar judgments have been admitted to be true, and their denial cannot be allowed. That is to say, precisely because they affirm *what* the actual situation *is*, we must admit them. Hence they are not totally mind-dependent, and to that extent what they affirm is affirmed because of what is. My affirmation does not *make them true*, but my affirmation is true because it affirms what is. Thus, as was said above, in at least this minimal sense Realism alone can give consistent meaning to what we have already seen. Were this not so, were everything purely internal to the mind and a product of the mind, it would make no difference what I affirmed, because it would become true by my affirmation. This, however, is not my experience. Hence, I realize that I must submit to and admit *what is*, precisely because *it is*.

Thus, without going immediately into the consideration of the nature, grades, or kinds of being, we can say that human judgment, as an act of knowledge, and the very existence of human truth, at least in the instances we have seen, involves transcendence. It is not the same to affirm Scepticism as it is to deny it, or to affirm Idealism as to deny it. We are not free to judge in these matters just as we please, but we must admit the situation as it is and affirm what is. The statement that being is the object of our intellect becomes clear in the light of this consideration.

(d) *The Proper Question To Ask.* *Reflection on the data themselves:* That our analysis has been proceeding correctly can also be seen by reflecting further on the situation, and by examining the precise question which should be asked in this matter.

The function of the philosopher is to seek the fundamental explanation of reality, not as he would like it to be nor as it might be, but as it is actually given. So, in evaluating human knowledge, he should first seek to describe it as it is and then to explain the facts of the concrete situation. That we do experience being as "other," that we seek to conform to the other as it is, is not only the normal everyday experience of man, but is also the explanation

of the experiments and studies of every scientific endeavor. That complex, concrete experience is what is to be explained. Explanation cannot mean the suppression or elimination of evidence, because once that is done, the experienced situation is no longer being explained.

Hence, the precise question which should have been and should now be raised is, *how* can human knowledge be knowledge of an independent being? *How* can the elements of identity and diversity be reconciled? Both are data. They are equally elements in the situation, so to deny identity is really to deny the experience, or to deny diversity is to deny, not to explain, the experience.

(e) *Real and Intentional Orders.* Since, in the concrete acts of knowledge, the reconciliation is actually simultaneously present, the function of a theory of knowledge is to provide a coherent explanation of the facts. Now if both elements under discussion are said to be in the same order, the assumption of a philosophical attitude called reductionism¹ is inevitable; and this cannot be admitted. Hence, we are forced to recognize and admit the fact that part of the complexity in human knowledge is found in the need for distinguishing clearly between being in the "real" order and being in the order of cognition or the "intentional" order. What is known has both real existence and intentional existence. Only by the recognition of this dual existence of one and the same "nature" or "thing" can both the identity-diversity and the dynamic-static or active-passive characteristics of cognition be preserved in a theory of knowledge. Thus, knower and known are *diverse* in the real order, whereas there is *identity* only in the intentional order. Passivity or receptivity characterizes knowledge in the sense that the mind must receive from what is and conforms to it; the dynamism or activity of the intellect is seen in that the mind gives the object

¹ *Reductionism:* This term is used in reference to those schools which admit only one order or level of being (for example, merely material or merely spiritual; merely mental or merely corporeal), and which then seek to explain *all* data in the light of the one "order" accepted. In the matter at hand this attitude is found in the attempt to accept only one part of the data of the knowledge situation (the identity of knower and known) and to reject the other (diversity), thus equating knowledge with total immanence of the object. Thereby the physical order is "reduced" to the intentional order, and the experienced facts are not explained, but evaded. This is an oversimplification.

a new "intentional" existence by making what was merely *knowable* actually *known*. This is far from a creation of the object known, since it just renders *what is* now a *what is known*.

(f) *Intentional Representation*. The explanation thus far still leaves a region of obscurity. Physical or real diversity means that the object really remains "other" and does not in its physical entity enter the mind. How then can there be intentional identity? There is one and only one explanation possible, and since cognition is a fact, it must be accepted. It is that the object enters the mind by way of an intentional likeness or representation. Only in this way can the data of the situation be explained.

Even this explanation, however, cannot be accepted without qualifications, since it would seem that in the last analysis the thing actually known would be the representation of reality and not reality itself, and this would fail to explain knowledge as it is experienced. Hence the meaning and function of the "likeness" or "representation" must be clarified.

A Unique Sort of Representation. First: in this matter a representation must not be naively equated with an ordinary photograph or copy. Such a view is too imaginative and crude to fit the facts in the case of knowledge. Ordinarily a "copy" is itself a something which I can handle and see and which I know in itself, only secondarily and by means of it do I know something about that which is copied. The copy functions as an *instrumental sign*. In knowledge, however, two things must be kept in mind: (1) there is conformity to *what is*, not to a copy of what is; (2) things are intentionally present by representations, not in their physical independent reality. Hence, the representation here is unique and quite unlike any other type of representation. Since knowledge is true and reliable, it does represent what is; since, however, reality is itself known, the representation functions only as that *whereby* or *in which* the object is known, rather than as the object known. Hence, it is said to be a *formal sign*.

A Unique Sort of Means. Second: The representation can also be called a *means* necessary for intentional union with an object. Here again the notion of "means" needs the same qualifications. Elsewhere "means" are things which are themselves taken and used as they are in order to obtain some result or other. In knowledge,

the sole function of the representation is to be that *whereby* I grasp the object known, not to be grasped in itself. In other words, representation or means or whatever word is used to describe the function of this element of knowledge must be seen to have a very special meaning, not applicable to any other sphere. Nor is this surprising. Since knowledge is a unique, *sui generis* sort of experience, it is an oversimplification to expect to be able to transfer to it notions taken from other spheres of reference, unless qualifications are added.

(g) *Existence of Sensible Things.* Concerning sensation in general: A more detailed treatment of sensible qualities will be postponed to the next chapter, but we can easily apply what has just been said to the question of the existence of sensible things and of our knowledge of the existence of sensible reality.

This existence of sensible things is a *given* in my experience, hence the question whether or not they exist should never arise. One can ask about the *nature* of material things (in Cosmology), or about *how I know them*; but that they do exist is as evident to me as knowledge itself, the truth of my own existence, the principle of contradiction, or the knowledge that truth is possible of attainment.

In fact, a serious doubt about the existence of sensible reality strikes at the very roots of knowledge, and amounts to a rejection of the ability of the human mind to know truth. The mind, as we have seen, can know truth, that is, can be conformed to *what is*.

Moreover, reflection shows that the mind in all its activities is intimately linked with sensation. What we know directly and easily are sense things, whose images we possess; when we think of "non-sensible" things we always conceive them in relation to or comparison with sensible things. As a matter of fact, even my own acts and existence are known in connection with my sense acts.

In addition, we judge by natural inclination and with the greatest conviction that sensible things do exist. Were the intellect unreliable in this matter, it would quite simply be unreliable in its supposed ability to know what is. It would of its very nature be erroneous, and this cannot be reconciled with what was seen in the early chapters.

In a word, the existence of sensible things is an evidence, a source or principle, of knowledge. It is no more dubious and no

more capable of being demonstrated than is the ability of the mind itself to know truth. Hence we said that the question is not whether sensible reality exists, but *how we know it*.

(h) *How I Know Sensible Existents*. To that last question basically the same answer must be given as was given in the general consideration above. Existent sensible things obviously do not physically enter the mind (a thought about the color green is not a green thought, nor is the idea of weight a heavy idea). Hence there is an intentional representation of existent sensible things in the mind.

This representation is not itself the object known, nor is it a means *which* is *first* grasped and which then leads to an "other." Rather it is a means only in the sense that it is that *whereby* the sensible object is immediately known. Hence immediacy in this matter takes on a new meaning. It does not exclude complexity, and it does allow for a unique sort of representation or means.

(i) *What I Know Is the Existent Sensible Object*. *How I know it* is by means of a unique sort of representation.

This provides a coherent explanation of the easily experienced but difficult-to-explain fact of my knowledge of things other than the knower. Moreover, it allows for the immediacy of my knowledge of things, since the representation itself is not made into an object known, as happens in the "copy" theory of knowledge. Thus the human *way of knowing* is complex and unique, but through and in that human way, I immediately know reality itself.

III • SUMMARY OF THE ANALYSIS

(a) Human knowledge seems to require both identity and diversity between knower and known. Can these apparently conflicting characteristics be explained? Cf. *Analysis (a)*.

(b) The denial of diversity results in a coherent explanation, but cannot be reconciled either with our experience or with what has been seen in previous analyses. Cf. *Analysis (b)*.

(c) *From previous analyses* we have seen that some judgments are *true*, that they must be affirmed because of what the situation is, and that my affirmation does not *make* them true. To this minimal degree, some transcendence of the object is implied in what we have already seen. Cf. *Analysis (c)*.

(d) Turning to the *data themselves*, we find that both identity and diversity are given or experienced. The proper question, then, is *how* they can be reconciled, or *how* an independent object can become known. Cf. *Analysis (d)*.

(e) This necessitates a distinction between the "real" and the "intentional" orders of being. Diversity of knower and known is true of the "real" order; identity is found in the "intentional" order. In this way, also, the dynamic and static aspects of knowledge can be reconciled. Cf. *Analysis (e)*.

(f) Intentional identity is made possible by the existence in the mind of some representation or likeness of the object. Otherwise there would be physical identity. This likeness, moreover, is something unique and peculiar to human knowledge. It is not a "copy" in any ordinary sense, and cannot be called the object known. It is rather a representation *whereby* or *in which* the transcendent object is immediately known. With the same qualifications, it can be called a *means* whereby or in which the object is immediately known. The immediacy of knowledge, then, does not exclude complexity in our way of knowing things. Cf. *Analysis (f)*.

(g) Considering more specifically the existence of sensible things, we can say that:

- (1) Their existence is indubitable and indemonstrable.
- (2) Serious doubt about this would undermine the mind's ability to know truth.
- (3) All my knowledge is intimately linked to the knowledge of sensible existents.
- (4) I naturally and spontaneously judge that they exist, and error here would affect the very nature of the mind.
- (5) In human knowledge, the existence of sensible reality is an evidence, a principle or source of knowledge. Cf. *Analysis (g)*.

(h) But the question "how do I know such sensible existents?" can rightly be asked. The reply is that although they remain physically diverse, I grasp them through some representation or likeness which, as was seen above, must be not the object known but the means or sign *whereby* or *in which* I immediately know sensible existents. This means that human knowledge is at once complex and immediate. Cf. *Analysis (h), (i)*.

IV • THE STATEMENT IN BRIEF

The transcendence of the object of knowledge is immediately known. The way in which I know, however, is complex and involves a unique sort of means or representation.

V • DEFINITIONS

Transcendence: a characteristic of the object known, meaning its *independence* with respect to the cognitive activity whereby it is known. (Thus a transcendent object is one whose reality is not due to cognition, but which precedes and regulates knowledge. This term is used elsewhere in philosophy with a much less restricted meaning and in general it involves the character of surpassing a given level or limit.)

Immediately Known: indemonstrable because self-evident.

Intentional Order: the order of knowledge or the logical order, seen precisely as *tending into* or towards reality.

Real Order: the physical order of actual existents.

Instrumental Sign (or a means *which* is used): a thing which is itself first grasped and then leads to the knowledge of something else, as for example, smoke with respect to fire.

Formal Sign (or a means *whereby* or *in which*): a sign whose whole function is relative, so that it itself is not *first* grasped, but rather in or through it the thing represented is immediately grasped.

Complex: not simple, something which has several elements or parts.

VI • SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES

The main objections to the analysis presented in this chapter rest on misunderstandings as to (a) the nature of the representation or likeness which has been proposed; (b) the internal presence of the object known; and (c) the active-passive aspects of knowledge. Hence for purposes of clarity the following points can be repeated:

(a) The likeness is not the object known, hence knowledge is not mediate. Its whole function is to make the object intentionally

present. Nor should this explanation be confused with the "copy" theory, according to which knowledge really is only the representation of a representation. That no parallel to this sort of formal sign or means can be found elsewhere is nothing strange, since human knowledge is not found elsewhere. And we must be careful to avoid the sort of reductionism which seeks to explain one sort of experience, such as cognitional "possession," in terms of a different level of experience, such as material "possession."

(b) In our theory, the object known is at once intentionally immanent and physically transcendent, so that the act of knowledge is entitatively an internal perfection of the knower, and is, at the same time, objective with respect to what is represented. So there is no physical "going out" to the object on the part of the subject, nor any physical "entering in" on the part of the object. Such views are only the result of a too simplified or imaginative approach.

(c) Finally, the analysis given preserves both the active and passive aspects of knowledge. Knowledge is passive only in the sense that it must acknowledge what is and be regulated by and receptive to being; it is active in the sense that it makes the object actually known by virtue of the likeness or representation. This it does, not by an act of creation, but by actively conforming itself to what is.

ELEMENTS AND SOURCES OF KNOWLEDGE

Thus far our analyses have considered our basic capacity for knowing truth, and we have gradually come to an explicit admission of the fact that a careful reflective analysis of human knowledge as it is concretely experienced must lead to the explicit recognition of my human capacity for truth in the sense that truth is absolute or objective, that its object is transcendent, and that my manner of knowing the object is at once complex and immediate.

We shall now turn to a more careful consideration of the various elements or sources of human knowledge. Apart from the fact that each of the elements to be considered has provided abundant problems for discussion in the history of thought, each of them should be considered carefully in order that we may complete a well-balanced theory of knowledge, and face the specific questions which can arise in these various areas. Thus in the following chapters, we shall turn our attention to: sensation (Chapter Six), concepts (Chapters Seven and Eight), judgments (Chapter Nine), and reasoning (Chapters Ten through Twelve). Our knowledge seems to rest on sense experience, to proceed through the formation of new ideas, and to be expressed in judgments. We seem also to be able to acquire new truths by various sorts of ratiocination. Hence, all these elements must be considered for their relation to truth.

• *Suggested Readings—Chapters Six
Through Twelve*

Aquinas, St. Thomas, *Basic Writings of Saint Thomas Aquinas*, ed. Anton C. Pegis, vol. I, q. 16, pp. 168 ff. New York: Random House, Inc., 1945.

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- Regis, L. M., O.P., *Epistemology*, translated by I. C. Byrne, pp. 311-64. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1959.
- Wild, John, *Introduction to Realistic Philosophy*, pp. 413-39, 441-68. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1948.
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SENSATION AND TRUTH

I • THE SITUATION

(a) *Sensation Attacked.* Although it would seem true that all our knowledge somehow arises from sensation, the reliability of the senses has been variously and vigorously attacked during the whole course of the history of philosophy. The attack has been particularly acute in the modern era, due to the influence of Rationalism and philosophical Empiricism, and especially to misunderstandings arising from the findings of the empirical sciences, particularly from those of experimental psychology. Since this question is so vast in its implications, our limited purpose of discovering the basic elements of a coherent theory of knowledge must be kept in mind. Hence we cannot be expected to go into details which pertain more to Psychology, Cosmology, or the empirical sciences.

(b) *Senses Are Very Limited in Range.* Many difficulties would be avoided and many objections easily answered, if the following fact were remembered: the senses are material, very limited, and highly specialized organs of perception. They are built to function in a very limited range and in respect to selected stimuli. To expect them to be reliable beyond their extremely limited horizon is to ask the unreasonable, and to impugn them for their limitations is merely a refusal to accept them as they are. To want the eye to see sound or the ear to hear color is patently absurd, but to expect the eye to see subvisual particles and to complain because it does not is also to fail to recognize the natural limitations of each sense in respect to what it can perceive.

(c) *Proper Conditions Needed.* Thus we can say in general that since the senses are *material organs*, they must be in a healthy condition and rightly disposed in order to function reliably. Any disease or defect will naturally interfere with their normal functioning. The very recognition of abnormalities in this matter is an indication that the intellect is capable of knowing what is and what is not normal.

Moreover, since the object perceived remains other than the particular sense involved, its impulse is usually transmitted through *some medium* or other. An improper medium or a defect in the medium will naturally interfere with proper perception.

Finally, *the object* perceived must be proportioned to the sense. If it is too distant or otherwise disproportioned to the sense in question, it will not be rightly sensed.

Hence, certain conditions must normally be fulfilled on the part of the organ, the medium, and the object; and it is the work of an intelligent subject to recognize these.

(d) *Divisions.* Traditionally, what we perceive has been divided into two classes called *Proper Sensibles* and *Common Sensibles*.

A *Proper Sensible* is that which is naturally perceived by only one sense. Thus the object of sight is color; of hearing, sound; of smell, odor; of taste, savor; of touch, heat or cold or resistance, and so forth.

A *Common Sensible* is that which is naturally perceived by several senses, such as movement, rest, number, figure, and magnitude.

John Locke popularized a different terminology so that what had been known as a proper sensible became known as a *Secondary Quality*, whereas the common sensible was called a *Primary Quality*. (The slight changes which he made in his lists of qualities need not detain us here.)

(e) *Objectivity of Qualities.* In the previous chapter we saw that the existence of sensible things is an immediate datum of our experience, and hence it need not and cannot be demonstrated. It is a source of knowledge, not a conclusion. In the present chapter we want to consider more closely the sensible qualities themselves, in order to assess their objectivity and to learn how reliable the senses may be said to be in perceiving them. For purposes of orderliness and clarity we shall turn first to the common sensibles.

II • THE ANALYSIS

Common Sensibles

(a) *On Extension.* The explicit consideration here can be limited to the quality of extension alone, since the other primary qualities are intimately linked up with and dependent on extension. Moreover, the present analysis can very easily be applied to each of the others in turn.

We can describe extension as that property of sensible things by virtue of which they are shaped one way or another, or are divisible into parts.

(b) *Intelligible Notion.* Reflecting now upon my experience of extension and my judgments concerning it in the light of what has already been seen about my intellectual capacity for truth, I recognize certain facts. First, I do have an intelligible notion of extension. Second, I predicate that notion regularly and evidently of things.

That I have an intelligible notion of extension is clear from the fact that I can describe what I mean by it, and can do so in a way which distinguishes it from every other quality and every other thing. Moreover, my notion is such that it is not limited to any one extension or extended thing, but can be predicated indifferently of many very different things, such as apple, tree, brick, house, man. In this sense it is truly an *intelligible* notion in that it is not limited to this or that particular extended thing, but can be and is predicated of any one or all of several things.

(c) *Predicated of Reality.* Moreover, it is an incontrovertible fact that I regularly and naturally judge material reality to be extended. The actions of ordinary living, such as walking and riding are constant confirmations of my acceptance of the fact of extension as something given and something constantly present to me. This is something of which I am ever aware and on which the conduct of my life and action rests without hesitation.

(d) *Reliability of the Predication.* Reflecting upon these facts, and viewing them in the light of our first chapters, it must be admitted that we are here presented with an element whose validity or falsity is intimately connected with the intellect's capacity for truth. The intellect naturally and spontaneously grasps and af-

firms the fact of extension. Of its very nature it applies this intelligible notion to reality, and has no grounds or even possibility of detecting error in this, its natural inclination. Hence this sort of predication is as natural to the mind as anything can be, and were it to be deceived in such evident and ever recurrent predications, the error would be an inherent and native characteristic of the mind. This, however, cannot be admitted, since it would not be consistent with the natural capacity of the mind for truth. To admit such error to be of the nature of the intellect would be to deny that it is an intellect at all, because insofar as it is an intellect, it is capable of knowing being, whereas insofar as it would be said to err of its very nature in respect to extension, it would of its very nature be erroneous, hence noncognitive of being.

Hence, careful reflection merely explicates in this matter what is naturally recognized: namely, that extension is an immediate datum of our experience, and that the intellect cannot of its nature be erroneous in the judgments whereby it predicates extension of reality.

Proper Sensibles

(e) *Difficulties Proposed.* Turning to a consideration of the proper sensibles (or secondary qualities), it must first be admitted that many difficulties concerning their objectivity can be and have been proposed. Thus, color blindness, the feeling of pain in an amputated limb, the variety of sense reactions to electrical stimuli, and similar experiences have awakened doubts and problems about the reliability of sensation. Later we shall briefly consider some of these objections, but for the present it should be borne in mind that a difficulty is vastly different from a well-founded doubt and that even when a solution cannot be apodictically proposed, it can be sufficient to show that no other proposed solution meets the difficulty in question. In this present question our analysis will proceed in two steps to show: (1) that the secondary quality somehow really exists in the object which is sensed; and (2) that the quality should normally be said to exist formally in reality.

(f) *Causal vs. Formal Existence.* At least theoretically, various possibilities are open regarding the existence of proper sensibles. They can be said to be purely and totally subjective; they can be said to exist in reality only in the sense that a something or other is

there which causes the subjective impressions; or they can be said to exist formally in reality as they are perceived. However, since their *purely mental* existence can in no way be reconciled with the analysis in Chapter Five, it remains to determine whether they exist only causally or formally in reality.

Mere causal extramental existence would mean that there exists in the object sensed some power or other, not sensed in itself, but somehow capable of causing in the sense organ that which is perceived as sound, color, taste, and so forth. This would mean that such qualities are not actually qualities of the object sensed, but subjective reactions to and interpretations of the stimulus received.

Formal extramental existence would mean that this wall is really white, this sound really loud or harsh, or this water really warm. The function of the senses would be not to interpret an unknown impulse from the object, but to perceive what is characteristic of the object and admit what objectively is in reality.

(g) *Passivity of the Senses.* First of all, it can be stated that sensible cognition appears to be clearly aroused by and dependent on a sense object. If I open my eyes, I see something there and I can will not to see it as seriously and vigorously as possible, but without success. This and countless similar experiences indicate that my senses are passive or receptive in relation to their objects.

In other words, my senses are *activated* by some activity of the object which influences and determines them. Thus, the healthy eye is capable of seeing or the ear is capable of hearing, but to actuate that ability there is required some action or some causal influence from the object in respect to the color, sound, or other sense quality which is perceived. Hence, the color or sound must somehow or other exist in the object itself.

(h) *Common Sensible Grasped Through Proper Sensible.* This explanation, however, does not yet determine clearly enough just how the quality is said to be in the object, whether formally or merely causally. It has already been seen that the common sensible is truly objective, and the same should be said of the proper sensible, since I do actually perceive both. In fact, I *see* extension precisely insofar as it is colored, and the loss of the ability to see a colored thing involves the loss of the ability to see an extended thing, because it literally means the loss of the ability to see. The senses, in other words, witness to and reveal what is; and their

witnessing reveals not only the common but also the proper sensible. Hence both are objectively or formally in reality. This does not mean that my knowledge of proper sensibles presupposes my knowledge of common sensibles or that I establish the objectivity of the proper by reliance on the common. Rather, what has been said of the objectivity of the common sensibles can also be said, even *a fortiori*, of the proper sensibles, since in my grasp of sensibles the latter have a priority. (Cf. Wild, *Introduction to Realistic Philosophy*, Chapter Eighteen.)

(i) *A Natural Conviction.* Again, reflection reveals our natural conviction that secondary qualities are real. In this context it is difficult (even impossible) to see what the mere causal existence of secondary qualities can mean or how it can actually differ from their being there formally. If by "causally" is meant "eminently," then *what is in reality is not sensed*, and sensation ceases to testify to *what is*, since in that case it would give only the "appearance" of what is, leaving the object itself impenetrable. If by "causally" is meant any more than that, it coincides with saying that the qualities sensed exist "formally" in reality, and thus the objectivity of sensation is preserved.

(j) *Predication of an Intelligible Notion.* Our analysis in this matter could actually take the form of the reflection used under (b), (c), and (d). Thus, we do have an intelligible notion of each proper sensible, since we can recognize each and distinguish it from all else. These intelligible notions we do naturally and regularly predicate of sensible things (as is experienced by all and admitted even by those who might deny our position because of certain obscurities and difficulties in this question). Were the intellect wrong in this matter, its very nature as a faculty cognoscitive of what is would have to be seriously doubted or denied.

III • SUMMARY OF THE ANALYSIS

(a) I have an intelligible notion of extension, and this I constantly predicate as a self-evident property of reality. Cf. *Analysis* (b), (c).

(b) Since the intellect is naturally trustworthy in this sort of predication, its judgment as to the validity of extension is trustworthy. Cf. *Analysis* (d).

(c) Proper sensibles must be said to exist either causally or formally in the object sensed. This is clear from an analysis of the passivity of the senses in respect to what is sensed about the object. Cf. *Analysis (e), (f), (g)*.

(d) With the same clarity the senses actually witness to and reveal the formal existence in reality of both the common and the proper sensibles. In fact, perception of the common sensibles presupposes perception of the proper sensibles. Hence, the proper sensibles exist formally in reality. Cf. *Analysis (h)*.

(e) What can mere "causal" existence of the qualities mean? If it means "eminently," the senses give us only phenomena and leave things unknowable as they are. If they are still said to be sensed as they are, then "causally" in this context really means the same as "formally." Cf. *Analysis (i)*.

(f) Here also it is true that we have an intelligible notion of the proper sensible, and that we do naturally and regularly predicate it of things. Error in such a case would touch the very nature of the intellect as a capacity for truth. Cf. *Analysis (j)*.

IV • THE STATEMENT IN BRIEF

Both common and proper sensibles exist formally in reality.

V • DEFINITIONS

Sensible: the object of a sense organ.

Proper Sensible (Secondary Quality): that which is naturally perceived by one sense only, such as color, sound, heat, resistance, and so forth.

Common Sensible (Primary Quality): that which is naturally perceived by two or more senses, such as extension, magnitude, rest, motion, and so forth.

Sense: an organic faculty the object of which is material being.

Extension: that property of sensible things whereby they have shape and are divisible into parts.

Exist Formally in Reality: that which is sensed does objectively characterize reality.

Exist Causally in Reality: that which is sensed is not objectively

in reality, but there exists some power or other in the object capable of producing the sensation.

VI • SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES

(a) The senses do frequently err, and yet the analyses just given do seem to exclude the possibility of error.

REPLY: Error is strictly found only in the intellect judging, and hence is not found in the senses. However, in the sense that the senses do frequently provide the occasion for intellectual error, it can be admitted that they frequently err. This can readily be conceded. However, in view of the intellect's capacity for truth and its natural reliance on the senses, it cannot be admitted that the senses are of their very nature erroneous. Rather, error is due to various other factors, such as inadvertence or precipitance of the intellect in judging, to a disease or defect in the senses, to improper media, or to some disproportion in the object. As was said, the senses are highly specialized and limited faculties, and should not be expected to function beyond their capacity. Man is intellectually capable of recognizing and respecting these limits, but he often in practice goes beyond the evidence and thus errs. This does not mean that the senses are not basically cognoscitive and reliable, but does mean that caution should be observed. (On this matter cf. St. Thomas, *On Truth*, q. 1, a. 11.)

(b) The microscopically discoverable discontinuity of sensible matter would seem to contradict the objectivity of real extension.

REPLY: There is no contradiction here for two reasons: (1) two quite different sorts of analyses are confused in the objection offered, since we are asking what is to be said about *sensibly perceived* extension, whereas the objection has to do with the *infrasensible*; and (2) even in the microscopic view there is still extension, hence there is confirmation rather than denial of our position. Moreover it must be remembered that the study of the *nature* of extension will be treated in Cosmology.

(c) One of the factors contributing to the assertion that proper sensibles are really subjective reactions only, is the fact that much progress has been scientifically made by treating qualities merely as quantified. That is to say, color, sound, and so forth, can be

measured with great accuracy according to wave lengths and thus easily classified. This clearly involves a quantitative aspect in respect to these qualities. It is then an easy step to the assertion that the so-called quality is identical with the quantity or measurable frequency recorded.

REPLY: As a matter of fact, it can be admitted that for all practical purposes in such empirical studies this method suffices and has been fruitful of results. And insofar as the scientist makes only scientific statements, he is quite justified. However, to extend his findings to determine the ontological categories of being is not the work of the empirical sciences but of that science which analyzes the grades of being, that is, of philosophy. From that perspective quality and quantity are irreducibly different categories. I do see an extended color, but the color is not the extension itself, nor is the extension the color. In fact, so far as knowledge is concerned, it is by virtue of the color that *I see* the extension, although ontologically it is by virtue of the extension that the color can *be* in the object. Hence if proper perspectives are maintained, there is no real conflict on this point.

(d) The proper sensible cannot be formally in the object, since, for example, pain or pleasure is not in the fire which either burns or gives warmth.

REPLY: A whole barrage of similar difficulties can be put forward concerning color, sound, and the other sense stimuli. Such objections would stress the point that these sensations are merely reactions of the organism to its environment and hence the qualities themselves are formally only in the organism.

In general it can be said that these involve a confusion between the sensation of a quality and the quality sensed. To say that *sensation* is formally in the sense is a truism, and if the quality for example, color, is made identical with the sensation of color, then the quality is purely subjective. However, this cannot be justified since sensation is the organic reaction to and reception of what is given. It is true that nothing can be sensed unless it is sensed, still it is not justifiable to say that what is sensed is the product of the act whereby it is sensed. On the level of sensation this parallels the famous "egocentric predicament" discussed and dismissed by R. B. Perry, when he so clearly pointed out that although it is true that the *ego* is involved in all knowledge in the sense that nothing

can be known without a knower, still from that it does not follow that what is known is the product of its being known. So, the actual sensation is formally in the organism which senses, but the actual quality sensed is formally in the object sensed.

Finally, it can be admitted that the "otherness" of what is sensed is more evident in the "higher" senses such as sight and hearing than it is in the "lower" or more material senses such as touch or taste. In the latter the sense itself is more entitatively and physically affected than in the former; as for example, in feeling heat, the organism itself not only feels the warmth but itself becomes warm. However, despite this greater "materiality," the same basic principle of objectivity must be admitted, although its application naturally requires qualifications according to the sense in question.

(e) Many individual facts would seem to show that what is sensed is not in the object. Thus pain is felt in an amputated limb; the same stimulus applied to the eye and ear produces the sensation of light in the one and of sound in the other; a sensation of cold is felt when a cold spot is touched even with a warm object; some people are "red-green blind," others, who are totally color-blind, equate every color with a definite neutral gray.

REPLY: In general these difficulties can be resolved to some extent by the following considerations:

- (1) the stimulus may be so complex that it does actually contain the quality which affects several senses; or
- (2) the stimulus by somehow exciting the nerves merely occasions the recall of previous images; or
- (3) abnormal structure of a sense naturally means defective reception of the objective quality.

In all these instances the intellect has its part to play by recognizing the defects in the situation, which might arise either from the object, or medium or sense, and by judging accordingly.

THE VALIDITY OF CONCEPTS

I • THE SITUATION

(a) *True Judgments and Their Elements.* Having briefly analyzed sense experience, and having recognized its natural and basic reliability as a source of knowledge about material things, we can now consider the intellectual way in which we come to know reality. In this matter it must be repeated that the act of which I am conscious and which I recognize as cognoscitive is the act of judgment. That I have judgments is an immediate datum of my experience; that I have some true judgments has already been seen in the first chapters. Moreover, since any judgment of predication is recognized as a complex act made up of a subject, a predicate and the assertion of a relation between them, we can already admit in a general sort of way that the elements of the judgment are themselves reliable and objective.

(b) *Special Problem.* However, there is a very special problem which arises in connection with some of our ideas, and it must be carefully analyzed. On the one hand every sensible thing we meet seems to be totally individual, singular, changing, and contingent; on the other hand we seem to have ideas which are universal, stable, and necessary. Hence, the questions naturally arise: Are there really any universal ideas? If there are, is there anything in reality which corresponds to them? This is the famous problem of the *universals* on which John of Salisbury even in the twelfth century said that "more time has been consumed in discussion than the Caesars spent in conquering the world and more

money than Croesus ever had." Porphyry would hardly touch the subject, since he considered it too complicated for an introductory work. Modern philosophy has handled the question in various ways, and solutions have varied from the denial of all universality to the denial of any real contingency.

(c) It must be admitted that we can now propose a coherent, satisfactory and valid solution to the vexing problem of the "one and the many" in its logical implications for a theory of knowledge, precisely because of the efforts at analysis, both successful and unsuccessful, on the part of our intellectual progenitors.

(d) *Limitation of the Question.* In approaching this question, two things are to be kept in mind: (1) We are speaking of judgments of predication, for example, this tree is an oak, John is a man, the house is white, this water is hot, and so on. (2) Although we recognize various types of ideas, as, for example, *singular* (this house), or *abstract* (whiteness, longevity, ability, or coldness), we are concerned precisely and solely with those which are called *universal*. These are concrete and univocal. Examples are man, house, dog, blue, green, tree, table, chair, tall, fat, gold, clean, and so forth—hence anything which can be used directly as a predicate in a judgment of predication.

II • THE ANALYSIS

(a) *Universality of Words, Ideas, Things.* Reflecting on the question of the existence of the "universals," it can be seen *a priori* that many solutions are at least theoretically possible. Thus, since the elements involved in knowledge and in its communication are the *words* used, the *things* about which one judges, and the *ideas* related in a judgment, it is theoretically possible to decide that there are:

- (1) universal words, singular ideas, and singular things; or
- (2) universal words, universal ideas, and singular things; or
- (3) universal words, universal ideas, and universal things; or finally,
- (4) universal words, universal ideas, and things somehow universal and yet singular.

(b) *Oral Predication and Ideas.* To determine whether there are universal ideas and whether these correspond to reality, it is necessary to start from something recognized and admitted by all.

That minimum is the fact that we do use one and the same *word* in *oral predication* to refer to many individuals. Thus orally I use the term "man" to refer to John, Peter, Joseph, or the word "chair" to refer to several objects.

This fact can now be related to the purpose and the function of human speech, which is to communicate to others what is in our minds. Words, therefore, manifest ideas, and various sorts or types of words must represent varying sorts of ideas. Thus singular words reveal singular ideas, and collective words reveal collective ideas, such as *flock* or *family*. Now we do use words such as *man*, *tree*, *dog*, *table*, and so forth, which cannot be characterized either as singular, since they are applied univocally to many, nor as collective, since they are applied distributively to individuals but not to groups or collectivities. Hence, if these are, as they must be, revelatory of what is in the mind, there must be in the mind ideas which are neither singular nor collective, but of another kind. These we call universal ideas, since they represent and can be predicated of many individuals singly and univocally.

Since the purpose of language is to manifest ideas in the mind, and since there are words which are universal, there are universal ideas in the mind.

(c) *Objectivity of Universal Concepts.* Moreover, in any true judgment the subject and predicate must represent what is in reality, in the sense that *what is asserted* is true of the object known. Since the mind is capable of truth, it follows that its concepts in true judgments are objective; and since what we call universal concepts are referred to and predicated of reality, it follows that universal concepts, when truly predicated, are objective. Without this objectivity, scientific knowledge would consist purely of fabrications quite divorced from reality.

(d) *The Way in Which the Universal Is Conceived.* Further analysis, however, of judgments of predication demands a new qualification. If you consider the judgments John is a man, Peter is a man, Joseph is a man, it is clear that what is predicated must be identical with the subject in each case. Hence *what* I conceive in grasping the concept "man" is found concretely identified with John, Peter, and Joseph.

But in order that *what* is predicated of John may also be predicated of Peter and Joseph, it is necessary that the notion of "man"

be known in a manner which makes such predication possible. How is it possible? It is possible only if the notion "man" is grasped in a way which does not restrict it to John alone or to Peter alone, that is, it must not include that which singularizes and concretizes it as it is in reality. All that makes man to be *this* man must be excluded from the notion. It is in this sense that we must say that the notion is grasped without the notes or characteristics which individuate it.

Thus *what* is conceived (man) exists in reality and the concept can be predicated of reality; *the way in which* the notion is conceived is peculiar to our human way of knowing, for it entails the exclusion of individuating notes, and this is not true of reality. One and the same nature exists individuated in reality, and nonindividuated in the mind. If this were not true, predication would not be possible—and we know that predication is possible because it is a fact.

(e) *Need for Distinction.* All this, however, gives rise to a further question. If *what* is conceived and predicated of a thing, for example, John is white, is objectively true of the thing, then both "John" and "white" must be identified or one in reality. If, on the other hand, I must conceive "white" in such a *way* that it can also be predicated of "Joseph" and of "book" and of "paper," it would seem that "John" and "white" must also be somehow separated or nonidentified. So a distinction or separation must somehow be introduced between "man" and whatever singularizes it or makes it to be "this" man.

Now, understanding *distinction* to mean the absence of identity between two or more things, and a *real distinction* to be one which exists in reality, for example, between chair and table, and a *rational distinction* to be one which is introduced by the mind where there is none in reality, we can say immediately that between *man* and *this man* there is and can be no real distinction. True predication demands real identity between the subject and predicate. Thus, to say that "John is a man" is to say that all that makes up the comprehension of man is found concretely and singularly in and identified with John. "Man" is predicated of him as a whole, not as a part.

(f) *Foundation for Rational Distinction.* Thus, any distinction between "man" and all that concretely makes man "this man" must

be said to be a rational distinction, one introduced by the mind between "things" really identical.

Is this a purely arbitrary function of the human mind, or is there some foundation in things themselves which justifies this rational distinction? That it is not purely arbitrary or whimsical is already admitted by the recognition of the objectivity and validity of judgments of predication. More concretely, the precise reason for saying that the mind legitimately makes this distinction is to be found in the fact that things are objectively and really similar. Thus, there is a real similarity between John and James in that both are men, or tall, or white; between the wall and the book in that both are green in color; between an elephant and a mouse in that both are animal, or gray, or four-footed, and so on.

Since two or more things can be recognized as objectively similar in many aspects, and yet one is not the other, it must also be admitted that they are dissimilar in other aspects, and in fact that they are dissimilar in everything which makes each to be an individualized singular being. Thus, things have *common* characteristics, and also *proper* or individual characteristics. For example, every man has blood and bones and flesh, and these are common aspects in which Joseph and Peter equally share, yet each of them differs from the other in that each one's body is limited and determined and proper and thus individually different.

Going one step beyond this, one can say that the foundation for the rational distinction between the common nature and the individuating principles in question is to be found in the fact that each material thing is a *composite* being. That is to say, beings *are* similar and they *are* also dissimilar, and that whereby they are similar must be really distinct from that whereby they are dissimilar. Otherwise there could be no objective differences between them, and they would not be really two or more individuals, but one only individual. Hence, there must be some real composition in a material thing, the components being: (1) that reason or source or principle which accounts for similarity and (2) that principle which accounts for their dissimilarity.

Later, in *Metaphysics*, it will be seen that this fundamental composition is one of matter and form or of act and potency, but for the present it is enough to see that the individual is not really simple but a composite being, and that *some real composition* in each individual is the basis and the objective justification for the rational

distinction made between the "nature" and the "individuating principles" in the conception of the universal.

III • SUMMARY OF THE ANALYSIS

(a) By admitting that oral predication is meaningful only in the sense that it is manifestative of knowledge, one admits also that to words of irreducibly different types there correspond ideas of irreducibly different types. Thus, to singular words there correspond singular ideas, and to collective words, collective ideas. Since words such as *man*, *tree*, and *white* are neither singular nor collective, there must correspond another sort of idea, called universal, since it is one idea which is predicable of many individuals distributively. Cf. *Analysis (b)*.

(b) *That which* is grasped in a universal concept is true of reality, since this follows from the mind's ability to know and judge reality and to build up scientific knowledge. Cf. *Analysis (c)*.

(c) *The way in which* the nature or notion is grasped is one which excludes all that individuates the nature. Otherwise it would be limited to one being only, for example, to John alone, and could not be predicated of others. Hence, *the way* or *manner* of conceiving things is peculiar to our way of knowing and is neither predicated nor predicable of what is in reality. Cf. *Analysis (d)*.

(d) True predication requires that the nature conceived (the universal) be really identified or one with the individuating principles. Cf. *Analysis (e)*.

(e) Hence, the distinction between a nature and all that individuates or singularizes it is a rational distinction. This rational distinction is not purely arbitrary or fictional, but has a foundation in singular things. The foundation is the fact that things are objectively similar in many aspects, and hence are *composite beings*, having both a principle whereby they are similar and a principle whereby they are dissimilar. Cf. *Analysis (f)*.

IV • THE STATEMENT IN BRIEF

There are universal concepts which are (a) objective in respect to what is conceived, (b) not objective in respect to the way in which they are conceived. What is conceived is really identical with and rationally distinct from the individuating principles.

V • DEFINITIONS

Universal: capable of being related to many, for example, the cause of several things, the blueprint of a chair in respect to many chairs made according to it, a word used to designate several objects, and so forth.

Universal in Being: capable of being in many.

Universal in Predication: capable of *being predicated* of many.

Objective: corresponding to reality, or existing in things.

What is Conceived: the aspect, note, or nature which is affirmed or denied.

The Way in Which: how the mind grasps or apprehends, according to the nature of the mind.

Distinction: the absence of identity between several things.

Real Distinction: one which is had in reality, as for example, John is really distinct from Joseph, or a table from a chair, or my foot from my arm.

Rational Distinction: one which is due to the operation of the mind. This can be done either with or without a foundation in reality for the distinction made.

Individuating Principles: those determinations whereby the individual is actually individuated. These are more essential than the mere accidents of size, shape, place, time, and so forth, and refer to the very material being itself in all that makes it radically "this."

THE VALIDITY OF CONCEPTS (*Continued*)

I • THE SITUATION

(a) From the previous chapter it can be seen that in respect to universality and singularity we can say that we do use universal *words*, we do have universal *concepts*, and that *things* are formally or actually singular, but that their objective similarities provide a real foundation for universal concepts. In that sense they can be said to be *fundamentally universal*.

(b) Granted, therefore, that we have valid universal concepts, the question naturally arises as to *how these are acquired*. Since the nature apprehended is formally singular in reality and is rendered formally universal only by the mind (under the direction, it is true, of reality, and guided by the recognized structure of beings), what is the process which makes this possible while preserving the objectivity of knowledge?

II • THE ANALYSIS

(a) *Explanation Must Respect Fact of Predication.* To arrive at a balanced and coherent answer to this question, it will be necessary to recall just what we have to work on, and to follow each step carefully, keeping in mind that we are speaking of *intellectual* knowledge, and so being careful not to let the imagination hamper our investigation by demanding a "picture" of something which is beyond the sense level.

What we have to work on and what we are fully conscious of possessing is a judgment of predication, such as John is a man, Peter is a man, the table is green, the book is green, the water is cold, the house is cold, and so forth.

I predicate one and the same concept or predicate of several different subjects. Hence, however I acquired the predicate, it had to be in a way which makes such predication possible.

(b) *Two Ways of Apprehending.* Yet, reflecting upon the meaning and the implications in the judgments John is a man, Peter is a man, I find that "man" as used here has almost conflicting characteristics. On the one hand, in order to be predicated of many, it must first be seen precisely *as common to* and predicable of many. That is to say, the notion "man" must be apprehended in a way that includes the note of universality as such. In this way I grasp the *species* man, which as such cannot exist in reality, since only individual men exist. This, then, is a mental category which classifies beings but which I cannot predicate; I cannot say that "John is man (the species)."

On the other hand, since I do predicate man of John, I must also have apprehended this nature in another way; namely, in a way which does not include either universality as such nor singularity as such. Were it to include universality, it could not be predicated of individuals (one cannot say that John is the universal man). Were it to include singularity, it could not be predicated of more than that one singular being (one does not say that John is man in a sense applicable to no one else).

Hence, it must be admitted that in apprehending natures or things under one or another aspect, I apprehend that aspect or note in two quite different ways. In one apprehension I conceive the nature or note merely according to what it means (its comprehension), omitting all reference either to singularity or plurality, and hence, this gives me a grasp of the nature which is not formally universal, and which can therefore be predicated of things. All that is conceived is the nature *absolutely* considered, that is, not limited to any one individual nor yet formally universal. This is commonly known as the *direct universal*: *direct* because it is directly acquired from things and directly predicable of things, and *universal* only in the sense that it can be given the form of universality.

In the other apprehension I conceive the nature or note not only in its comprehension, but also according to its extension, that is, precisely as common to many. Without this conception there could be no predication of *that which* is grasped in the direct universal. To predicate *what is grasped* of many, it must first be seen that it is predicable of the many, and hence must receive the form of universality. This is known as the *reflex universal*: *reflex* because it presupposes a prior act of the subject in apprehending the nature absolutely, and *universal* because it is actually one and many simultaneously. This is the *universal in being* and it can exist only in the mind.

(c) Briefly, what I am explaining is the fact of predication. I am fully conscious of judging, that is, of affirming or denying the identity of a subject and a predicate. To do this, I must first apprehend them. To affirm the predicate of the subject, I must apprehend it as predicable, and this means: (1) grasping *what is to be predicated*, which is the nature or intelligible aspect—the direct universal, and (2) grasping it as *predicable of many*—the reflex universal. True, I am not conscious of these as such, but without them a judgment cannot be explained.

(d) The next question which arises is: *by what process does the mind form or apprehend these universals?* To answer this question is merely to explicitate what has already been seen.

(e) *Acquisition of Direct Universal.* Thus, since everything which exists is singular and individuated, and since the direct universal is some nature or intelligible aspect conceived according to its comprehension only, and thus totally free of individuating principles, the intellectual process of apprehending it must be one which separates that nature from the individuating principles. Abstraction in general means the separation of one thing from another. Hence, the direct universal is formed by some sort of mental abstraction or separation.

Moreover, this abstraction, or separation, is most unusual in the sense that nothing at all is positively apprehended except the nature according to its comprehension. That is to say, the individuating principles are not apprehended at all; even the fact that they are omitted is not grasped. If it were, the nature or note could not be predicated of the subject, because predication would mean, for example, that "John is a man without individuating principles,"

and this is not true. But "John" is and has all that "man" signifies, and that is all that is grasped through the sort of abstraction we are considering.

This sort of intentional abstraction is known as *total precision*: *total* because what is grasped is true of and predicable of the whole object; and also because the individuating principles are *totally* unknown, and *precision* because it involves an intentional separation in the order of simple apprehension of two things which in reality are identical.

Briefly, the direct universal is formed by the process of *total precision*. This, then, is the way in which human knowledge of sense reality originates, this is how our intellect spontaneously, naturally, and preconsciously proceeds in the acquisition of knowledge; and although we know *in this way*, we are totally unaware of it as we actually proceed in the act of knowing.

(f) *Acquisition of Reflex Universal*. So far as the reflex or formal universal is concerned, we see that it refers to one and the same nature now apprehended in its relation to the many individuals in which it is or can be. Hence, all that is added is the form of universality, and that is added by the mind because of the objective similarity existing between things.

So the reflex universal exists only in the mind and only when it is known. It is formed merely by the mind conceiving the direct universal as related to many, by simply comparing the one nature with the individuals in which it is or can be found.

This process is called *simple comparison*: *comparison* because one nature is compared or related to many individuals and *simple* because it is merely in the order of apprehension, not in the composite act of judgment. This latter must be true, since judgment itself already presupposes the reflex universal. No affirmation or negation is required, but merely the intellectual apprehension of the nature as capable of being found in many numerically distinct individuals. In other words, predicating the nature of many presupposes the apprehension of that nature as *predicable* of many or as related to many, and this is apprehended by simple comparison.

(g) *Existence in Two Orders*. From what has been seen, we can say that the nature or note which is conceived exists individuated and singular in reality, and the same nature exists in the intentional

order in a nonindividuated or universal way. So it can be considered either absolutely, apart from singularity or universality, or as singular, in reality, or as universal, in the mind.

(h) *Relation of Both to Reality.* Finally we can add that while both universals are possible and valid because things are really similar to one another, yet the direct universal is proximately founded on reality, since it is immediately abstracted from reality and can be predicated of it; whereas the reflex universal is only remotely founded on reality, in that it is directly concerned with the direct universal.

III • SUMMARY OF THE ANALYSIS

(a) In seeking to determine *how* the universal concept is acquired, I must realize that ultimately I am explaining how one nature can be predicated of several individuals, and hence the way of acquisition must be such as to allow for the possibility of such predication. Cf. *Analysis (a)*.

(b) What is apprehended, a nature, note, or intelligible aspect, is grasped in two ways: (1) *absolutely*, that is, without reference either to singularity or to universality, hence according to comprehension only—this nature does exist in reality and hence can be predicated of reality; (2) *relatively* to the individuals in which the nature is or can be found, hence including the note of universality. This is the “one common to many,” which exists formally only in the mind. It can itself be predicated of nothing, but because of it, I can predicate the direct universal of things. Cf. *Analysis (b), (c)*.

(c) The direct universal is grasped by a process called total precision. This means that what is grasped is the nature or intelligible aspect according to its comprehension only; I not only do not grasp the individuating principles, but I am not even aware that they are being omitted.

This must be so, because *what* is apprehended is predicated as a whole of an entire being, and the *omission* of individuating principles cannot be predicated. Hence this *omission* is the *natural way* in which the mind spontaneously apprehends, but it is not part of *what* is apprehended. Cf. *Analysis (e)*.

(d) The reflex universal is the same nature grasped in its relation

to many. As such it is a mental product, since no nature in reality is simultaneously one and many. To form it, only the form of universality or "predicability-of-many" need be added. This is added by *simple comparison*, that is, by the simple apprehension of the nature as capable of being in many. The judgment of predication itself presupposes the reflex universal, hence judgment cannot be required for its formation. Cf. *Analysis (f)*.

(e) The direct universal is predicated of reality and is directly founded on reality; the reflex universal is remotely founded on reality through the direct universal. Cf. *Analysis (h)*.

IV • THE STATEMENT IN BRIEF

There is a twofold universal: namely, direct and reflex. The direct universal is formed by total precision and is proximately founded on reality. The reflex universal is formed by simple comparison and is remotely founded on reality.

V • DEFINITIONS

Direct Universal: a nature or intelligible aspect, not having individuating notes, considered only in its comprehension, and hence, although not actually singular or universal, capable of being universalized.

Reflex Universal: a nature or intelligible aspect not having individuating notes, considered according to its comprehension and extension, and hence actually universal.

Total Precision: the conception of one thing in such a way that something really one or identical with it is not conceived. This is a sort of abstraction.

Abstraction: is the separation of one thing from another. If this separation takes place or exists in reality, it is *physical abstraction*; if it is done by the mind it is *intentional abstraction*.

Intentional Abstraction: can be either *negative*, in a negative judgment: John is not a lawyer, or *precisive*, in the order of apprehension.

Precision can be either total or partial:

Partial: if some part is considered, the remaining parts being

known but not attended to, for example, abstract ideas such as whiteness, tallness, sobriety, and so forth.

Total: if some whole is considered under one or another aspect without conceiving the individuating notes.

Comparison: is the consideration of one thing in its relation to another. Comparison can be either *simple*, in the order of simple apprehension, or *complex*, in the order of judgment.

VI • SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES

Without going into the many particular difficulties which can be urged against this analysis, it may be profitable to express some of the basic distinctions which lie at the roots of most of the confusion in this matter.

(a) *What is grasped* in the universal is objective and therefore predicated. *The way in which it is grasped* is proper to the intellect apprehending, is not objective, and therefore is not predicable.

(b) What is grasped in the universal is *not a part*, but rather the whole object under one or another aspect; that is, a subject and its form is grasped. Hence it is predicated as a whole of a whole. Thus it is true of the whole being "John" that he is "man," or "tall," or "bald-headed," or "fat," or "lame."

(c) The individuating principles are not positively included in the concept, else it would be a singular and predicable of just one being. Nor are they positively excluded, else it would not be predicable of that particular individual. So they may be said to be included *in a common way*. Thus the idea of "man" includes flesh, blood, and bones in general or in common, since there cannot be a man without them; but it is applicable to each and every man because it neither positively includes nor positively excludes any one of all the possible individual men. In this sense the universal is said to prescind from individual matter but not from common matter.

(d) The direct universal is neither singular nor universal in its reference, but is in potency to either.

(e) The reflex universal is either a genus, species, specific difference, property, or logical accident.

TRUTH AND THE JUDGMENT¹

I • THE SITUATION

Since the first chapter we have been occupied with judgments and with truth as being found in them. At this point we want to determine more precisely the relation that exists between them. Where is truth formally or essentially to be found, only in judgments, in other operations of the mind, or even outside the mind? Actually, by analyzing and answering this question we shall also learn what the nature of truth is.

II • THE ANALYSIS

(a) *Formal Truth.* In order to understand the nature of truth and where it is formally to be found, we can first consider in general those things to which "truth" is applied, and then study them for their interrelationships. We shall thus see that truth is applied essentially and formally to one of them, whereas it is applied to the others in a secondary or derivative sense.

In various ways we can say that *words* are true, that *things* are true, and that *knowledge* is true. From experience it would seem that this exhausts the possibilities for the appellation of truth.

(1) *Words and truth:* From one point of view we say that

¹ For a more detailed study of judgment and truth read, F. Wilhelmsen, *Man's Knowledge of Reality*, chs. 10-13, pp. 101-164.

words are *true* in the sense that they are the correct or right ones to use for a given thing. In this sense this is a question of the *true meaning* had in the mind rather than one of mistaking, for example, chrome for silver.

From the moral point of view speech is said to be true when it really manifests what is in the mind, that is, there is no deliberate lie.

Clearly in both of these cases there is a relation of the words to the truth of the intellect, and even a dependence on intellectual truth.

(2) *Things and truth*: Omitting consideration of essential ontological truth which will be discussed in another tract and which involves some conformity with the divine mind, we can say that *things* are called true in two ways. Thus the artist or artificer can say that his creation or artifact is *true* to his conception or idea; and anything at all can be said to be true in the extrinsic sense that it can be known and is thus conformable to the human mind.

Again in both of these cases, it is in respect to intellectual truth that these things are said to be true.

(3) *The mind and truth*: The intellect is said to be true or to have truth in so far as it is conformed to what is. Hence, although words and things are called true by their relation to intellectual truth, the intellect is said to be true by its relation to *being itself*, to what is.

Reflecting on these points we can easily see where essential or formal truth is to be found. Things and words are called true in a dependent and participative sense, deriving from the mind's truth; whereas intellectual truth is the proper perfection of the mind, toward which the mind is directed of its very nature. It does not presuppose the *truth* but the *being* of other things, and it actually accounts for their being called true.

Hence, formal truth, truth in its primary and essential meaning, is one with logical or intellectual truth.

(b) *Formal Truth Found Only in Judgment*. The next point to be clarified has to do with the precise mental act in which truth is found. The choice lies between the acts of simple apprehension and of judgment.

As a perfection which perfects the mind according to its intellectual nature, truth can be said to be formally or actually or essentially present only when it is experienced intellectually, that is, only

when it is *known to be possessed*. Apart from its *being known* it cannot be said actually to perfect the intellect the nature of which is to know.

Moreover, it is only in the *intentional* (knowledge) *order* that the conformity or adequation of mind and reality can be attained; hence it is only in so far as it is known that the *conformity which is truth* can exist.

Thus the *existence* of truth is one with its *being known*, and it cannot be said to be known in a simple apprehension where nothing is affirmed or denied, but only in an act of judgment where the intellect not only is proportioned to reality but is aware of this conformity and affirms it by saying that the thing is as it is judged to be.

Briefly, truth, as a perfection of the intellect, exists only as known, and is formally known only in the act of judging; hence truth formally exists only in the judgment.

(c) *Truth and Simple Apprehension*. Simple apprehension can be said to be true in the same sense in which it is said to be knowledge. It is preparatory and imperfect and ordained to judgment; so it has truth inchoatively or in its initial stages. It can be said to be *true cognition* in the sense that it does validly represent in the intentional order some aspect or note of what is; but since there is no complete reflection had and hence this conformity is not known, it cannot be said to be the *cognition of truth*.

(d) *Truth as Relational*. Finally, since formal truth is a relation or a conformity between mind and object known, a more refined question can be raised concerning the precise elements which are to be called the terms of the relation.

In the widest sense the two terms are *knower* and *known*, that is, when I have some truth, *I* am conformed to *what is*. But since I am not conformed to the object by my arm or my foot, greater precision can be had.

First, it is by virtue of *my intellect* that I am related to reality known. Moreover, it is my intellect precisely as having representations of reality and as *judging* about reality which is related. Hence the *act of judgment* is one term of the relation. More precisely still, it is not the act of judging as an ontological perfection of the mind which is related, for this is immaterial or spiritual. Moreover, if this act in its physical entity were conformed to what is, the knowledge of silver or of black would be a silver thought

or a black thought, and so on. Hence in the most precise formulation, one term of the relation which is truth is the act of judging *in respect to that which is said in the judgment*.

On the other hand, the other term of the relation cannot be the internal representation of the object, as we saw in chapter five; hence it is the object as it exists independently of the mind.

Briefly, truth involves a relation or conformity of two things, and these in general are the knower and the known. More accurately the one term is the knower in respect to *that which the intellect says* by judging, and the other term is the thing known just as it exists in reality.

III • SUMMARY OF THE ANALYSIS

(a) Words, things, and intellect can be said to be *true*. However, truth as predicated of words and things derives from, participates in, and depends on intellectual truth. Hence, truth is primarily or formally predicated of the intellect. Intellectual or logical truth refers not to the *truth* of things, but to their *being*. Thus essential or formal truth is intellectual rather than moral or ontological. Cf. *Analysis* (a).

(b) Formal truth exists only in the judgment. This is true because as an intellectual perfection it must exist in the mind according to the cognoscitive nature of the mind, that is, precisely *as known*. Although the simple apprehension is ontologically conformed to what is, this conformity is not yet known. Hence formal truth is not yet possessed. Cf. *Analysis* (b), (c).

(c) The precise terms of the relation of conformity which is truth itself are: (1) *the thing* as it exists in reality and (2) *that which the intellect says* in its judgment. One term is the thing as it is in reality; otherwise only a representation of the thing would be known. The other term is what the intellect *says* in judging, because that which is said is precisely proper to the intellect and is also true of reality. Cf. *Analysis* (d).

IV • THE STATEMENT IN BRIEF

Intellectual truth is formal truth, and this is found only in the act of judgment. Truth is a relation of conformity, and the terms of that relation are: (a) the thing as it exists extramentally, and (b) that which the intellect affirms or denies of the thing.

V • DEFINITIONS

Moral Truth: the conformity of speech to the mind.

Ontological Truth: (omitting essential ontological truth) is the conformity of an artifact or creation to the mind of the artificer. It can also mean the conformability of anything to the human intellect.

Logical Truth: the conformity of the mind to reality.

Formal Truth: that form or perfection in virtue of which everything said to be true is true.

Judgment: the act whereby the intellect affirms or denies one thing of another.

Simple Apprehension: the act whereby the intellect forms an idea or conception.

Relation: the reference of one thing to another.

Terms of a Relation: two objects or things referred to one another.

VI • SUPPLEMENTARY NOTE

Having seen that formal truth is found in the judgment, we can now turn to a brief consideration of the contrary of truth, namely, error or falsity. We shall examine the meaning and the sources of error.

(a) *Meaning of Error.* When we speak of error it must be kept in mind that we do not mean merely that the human mind often fails to know something which exists. It cannot be denied that our knowledge is partial and fragmentary; it proceeds by knowing an object now under this and now under that aspect, and thus it gradually acquires a fuller and more complex understanding of the object. This means that at any given moment there are many areas of ignorance and many unknown aspects in respect to any given reality. This, however, does not constitute falsity or error, but merely ignorance or a lack of knowledge.

Error actually means *the positive disconformity of judgment to reality*. By saying that it is a *positive disconformity* we mean that something is asserted about reality which is not so in reality, and thus the mind in judging falsely lacks the perfection of conformity which it should have. This *lack of a perfection which should be*

present is called a *privation*. In respect to the intellect judging, this privation consists in saying that something is what it is not or that it is not what it is; in other words it attributes a characteristic to an object which it does not have, or denies one which the object does have.

Moreover, just as truth is found formally only in the judgment, so, too, and for the same reasons, is falsity. Only in judgment is there conscious or known affirmation of the conformity between the mind knowing and the object known, so only in judgment can there be positive disconformity between mind and object.

Neither in sensation as such nor in simple apprehension as such can there be formal error, for these operations merely grasp what they grasp, and do not and cannot make any reference of their content to reality. When the color-blind person sees various colors merely as different shades of gray, and when he on any of those occasions forms the concept of gray, he does actually have that sensation, he does actually form that concept. These are not false, for they simply are what they are. Falsity enters when he asserts, "That house is gray and that fence is gray," whereas the house is really white and the fence green. In this case he asserts of an object a characteristic which does not belong to it.

(b) *Sources of Error*. Now if the intellect not only is capable of true judgments but is made to know truth, and if it knows only what is presented to it, how can there be error? If all we can know is what we encounter in our experience, and if we express in judgments what we do encounter, how can error be explained? For an answer we can consider some of the factors which influence our judgments.

(1) *The Senses*. Although the senses must never be likened to hostile beings which deceive us, it can be admitted that often enough they do occasion error. Thus a diseased or malfunctioning sense makes it impossible to reflect back to the material being as it is. The intellect can recognize this defect and compensate for it, as is seen, for example, in the case of those color-blind who know their condition. In this matter also the distance of the object or its obscurity, the imperfection of the medium between object and sense can provide occasions for error. But in any such case the formal error is not due to the sense but to the intellect judging without being sufficiently determined by the object as it is.

(2) *Other Factors.* Only brief reflection is needed to see that we err for various other reasons, such as lack of proper *attention*, owing to boredom, day-dreaming, and the like; *prejudices*, whether political, religious, personal, or scientific, which can make us accept appearances for reality; *carelessness* owing to an unwillingness to work hard and apply oneself until the object is really known, or until a reasoning process is completed; confusion of mind owing to anger, hatred, love, or other strong *emotions*. These and similar influences can be recognized in ordinary daily life as contributing to the subject's forming judgments which are afterwards frequently seen as erroneous.

(3) *The Will.* Although all this is true, the question still remains as to why or how the intellect *as an intellect*, that is, as a faculty for knowing what is, can assent to what is not. Basically the answer to this must be sought in the *will*, the object of which is the good. When the object presents itself with full self-evidence, the intellect is compelled to assent. However, this is not often the case, because of the complexity of beings and the limitations of the knowing subject. To wait for full evidence at all times would be the ideal in knowledge; however, the exigencies of living and the need for immediate action make it practically impossible. Here the influence of the will enters. To judge, to give firm assents is good for the intellect and for man. There is a peace and satisfaction experienced with a definitive stand and the assertion that "this is so." Thus swayed by one or several of the influences mentioned earlier, joined with the intellect's drive to know and to judge, the will determines the intellect to act. Under the circumstances the motives seem to be sufficient, so the decision should not be any longer postponed, and the intellect is determined to place the act of judging which perfects it.

This means that, faced with insufficient evidence, yet urged on by the pressure of emotion, impatience, or practical need, we freely decide that on this or that occasion it is good for us to take the risk involved in judging and so we actually assert that "this is so." What we say *may* be true, but often enough, as experience shows, it is false. When the latter is the case, we have said that something is what it is not, or that something is not what it is. We have acquiesced not in a partial truth, but in falsity.

REASONING IN GENERAL

I • THE SITUATION

Reasoning or ratiocination has been considered so characteristic of man that he has traditionally been defined as a rational animal, and in this ability both the power and the weakness of the human intellect is seen. It indicates man's power in the sense that from certain known truths he claims to derive new truths; it indicates his weakness since the process of reasoning is frequently a slow and laborious one and is always a complex way of arriving gradually at truth, whereas an immediate, intuitional, and comprehensive grasp of reality would point to a more powerful and more penetrating sort of intellect.

The fact that man does ratiocinate is a clear datum of experience; so the aim of these considerations is to learn by reflective analysis just how reasoning proceeds and to show that the methods of reasoning are basically valid, fruitful, and hence valuable processes of the mind. That both deduction and induction have at times been carelessly used to acquire unjustified conclusions, or that in many questions no certain solution has been reached or is likely to be reached, do not tell against the basic reliability of the mind when it functions discursively. We cannot defend nor do we even need to examine every application in this matter. Our task is more modest: it is to discover the meaning of the reasoning processes, and to indicate why these are basically trustworthy, and why, therefore, anyone who carefully proceeds in this manner is

following a very natural and a very fruitful way of acquiring new truths.

Since the matter in question here is reasoning itself, what we say cannot be established by ratiocination but must be the fruit of analysis.

II • THE ANALYSIS

(a) *Reasoning and Logical Causality.* By ratiocination is meant a process of the mind whereby it proceeds from what it already knows to the knowledge of some new truth. If this process is from a universal truth to a less universal or a particular one, it is called deduction. If it proceeds from particulars to a universal truth it is called induction.

Thus from the knowledge that any spiritual being is naturally immortal, I can learn that the human soul, being spiritual, is immortal. Or from observing the expansion of many metals when heated, I may be able to conclude that any metal at all will expand when heated.

In either procedure the supposition is that I do not have true knowledge of that to which I conclude, but want to know whether this predicate, for example, "immortal," or "expansion when heated," is to be affirmed or denied of this subject, for example, the human soul or metal. In the process of ratiocination the motive or the reason for asserting or denying the identity of subject and predicate is made manifest, and precisely because of the premises, I arrive at the conclusion.

This means that the premises have much more than a spatial or temporal priority in respect to the conclusion. In them is found the very *reason, motive, or cause* of my assent to the conclusion. Presupposing the truth of the premises and the presence of the correct form of reasoning, the mind is moved toward the conclusion in such a way that it is *not logically free*. Accepting the premises, it must assent to the conclusion, precisely because of the motive found in them.

In this sense reasoning is said to be a process which involves *logical causality*. In the order of knowledge it is one and the same thing to exercise causality and to function as a motive.

(b) *Function of the Medium.* Moreover, this causality is exercised precisely by the third thing, the medium, to which are

referred the subject and predicate of the conclusion. That is to say, what moves the mind to assent to the conclusion is something *extrinsic* to both subject and predicate, else there would be no *process* at all in this operation, and the one extrinsic thing involved is the medium, the third "thing" which mediates between and links the subject and the predicate so that their relation to one another becomes known.

Thus when there is no immediate knowledge of the relation between a subject and a predicate, their relationship may be found by comparing them to the same third "thing," whose relation to the subject, S, and to the predicate, P, is already known. As a result the relationship of S and P is affirmed or denied precisely because something else mediates between them and provides the *motive* for the assent and thus *causes* the conclusion to be drawn.

As will be seen, this medium is a middle term in deduction and it is experience in induction.

III • SUMMARY OF THE ANALYSIS

(a) Reasoning involves logical causality. This is seen in the fact that before the reasoning process takes place the conclusion is not known; during the process a reason or motive for it is found which demands intellectual assent or dissent. And reflection on the process shows that the entire reason or cause of the conclusion is found in the premises. Cf. *Analysis (a)*.

(b) This logical causality is exercised precisely by the *medium* or mediating third "thing" which links the subject and predicate. It is because of this medium, extrinsic both to S and to P, that the mind is necessitated, since there is no immediate grasp of their relationship. Cf. *Analysis (b)*.

IV • THE STATEMENT IN BRIEF

Reasoning proceeds by logical causality, exercised concretely by the medium.

V • DEFINITIONS

Ratiocination: an act whereby the mind proceeds from what it already knows to some new knowledge.

Deduction: the advance from a universal truth to a less universal or particular truth.

Induction: the advance from particular truths to a general truth.

Logical Causality: the influence, in the order of knowledge, of known truths such that they necessitate or motivate the acceptance of a new truth (the conclusion).

Medium: that which serves as an intermediary.

Extrinsic Medium: one which is formally identical with neither the subject nor the predicate, and yet is already known to be materially identical with each of them.

DEDUCTION

I • THE SITUATION

(a) *Two Questions.* The chief question raised in regard to deduction is whether it can possibly result in new knowledge. It would seem that if the conclusion is drawn from the premises, it must have already existed in them; and if it is already known, how can one be said to acquire *new* truth by this process? Once that point is examined, there remains this further question: since the truth of the conclusion presupposes the truth of the premises, where is the ultimate foundation for the truth of the premises to be discovered?

(b) *Source of New Mediate Truths.* The purpose of this chapter should be clearly defined and kept in mind. It is not to examine every case of deduction, since that is impossible and unnecessary, nor is it meant to defend the frequent invalid uses made of this process. Rather, it is to show that the process of deduction is or can be the source of genuine new truth. When the human intellect functions in this way, it is employing a native power which is *basically* fruitful and reliable, so that we are not limited to the immediately experienced, but have the power to use present truths for the acquisition of new ones.

(c) In this analysis it is presupposed that we are dealing with *bona fide* cases of deduction, in which the premises are granted to be true and the correct form of reasoning observed.

II • THE ANALYSIS

(a) *Illustration.* The deductive process amounts to this: I am confronted with a subject, S, and a predicate, P, and I do not

know whether it is true to say that S is P or that S is not P. However, I find out that there is a common something, M, whose relation to each of them I do know, and which I proceed to use as a mediating term. Thus knowing that every S is M and that P is not M, I now come to know that S is not P.

For example, I do not *know* whether the human soul is immortal or not. We can suppose, however, that I do know that anything spiritual is immortal. If I also know that the human soul is spiritual, I can conclude that it is immortal.

(b) *How the Conclusion Is Contained in Premises.* Without being unduly distracted by the content of the example given, we can examine what the process means. For one thing, we have already seen that to derive a conclusion from two premises means that it was already somehow contained in them. Moreover, we have seen that the conclusion follows with logical causality from the premises.

Now the question is: Just how are the premises to be said to contain the conclusion? Theoretically, three possibilities can be conceived: The conclusion may be said to be either actually, merely potentially, or virtually in the premises.

If it is *actually* in the premises, then it is formally or really known in the premises, even though it may be only implicitly. Thus in knowing "animal" I actually though implicitly know "body."

If it is *merely potentially* contained in the premises, then it may be or can be derived from them, but no note of necessity is included.

This latter note is precisely what is meant by the designation *virtually*. If the conclusion is virtually contained in the premises, then it not only can but should be admitted, if the premises are granted. That is to say, the note of a *necessary* sequence is admitted. Thus the mind would be necessitated, in the logical order, to admit the conclusion.

(c) *Not Merely Potentially.* Keeping in mind what was seen in the preceding chapter, we can now see that the *merely potential* presence of the conclusion in the premises is not enough. The added characteristic of logical necessity and the fact that the premises are causes of the conclusion demand more than such mere potentiality.

(d) *Not Actually.* Nor can it be said to be actually, that is, implicitly, known in the premises. If it were thus present, it would be found and known either in knowing the major premise or the minor. However, the major premise *taken alone* does not refer in any determinate way to the individuals, since they are in no way actually known in knowing the major. Thus if I know that everything spiritual is immortal by nature, and if that is all I know, I can in no way make a statement about the natural immortality of the human soul. The generality and the indeterminacy of the major must be applied to a definite and determinate individual or individuals before any new knowledge can be had. Thus knowing that M is P leaves me without knowledge of S or of its relation to M or to P.

Nor does the minor premise *taken alone* actually contain the conclusion, since it offers no knowledge of the predicate in question. All I know here is that S is M, and thus in this judgment alone I do not know that M is P. Hence from the minor I cannot arrive at the knowledge of the relation between S and P.

(e) *Conclusion Virtually in Premises.* Moreover, since the conclusion is actually contained neither in the major nor in the minor, the mere "spatial" or "temporal" juxtaposition of them will result in no new knowledge at all. In that case I would merely possess two separated and isolated judgments. All that is required, however, is that these two now be seen in their interrelationship. Once that is seen, the linking function of the medium is grasped, the two judgments are thereby known as forming a unity, the necessary determination is provided, and the conclusion is thereby apprehended and affirmed.

This means that one can best designate the way in which the conclusion is found in the premises as *virtual*, that is, not-actually and not-merely-potentially, but potentially with the added characteristic that once the premises function precisely *as premises*—not as isolated propositions but as interrelated through a common medium—I am logically *necessitated* to admit the conclusion.

(f) *New Knowledge.* That this process begets *new* knowledge becomes clear when it is realized that the conclusion is in no way *actually* (explicitly or implicitly) known in either the major or the minor. To say that it is virtually known means that I can, should,

and must draw the conclusion from these premises. Thus what is *indeterminate* and hence unknown becomes determinate knowledge through this process. In other words, *new* knowledge is derived from deduction.

(g) *Foundation in Analytic Principles.* From what has preceded we have seen that deduction proceeds by logical causality exercised through a middle term and that this form of reasoning can be said to provide new knowledge. Now there arises a question relative to *the truth of the conclusion* and its relation to the truth of the premises, particularly of the major premise, since that is usually the universal statement which indeterminately contains the conclusion and which is determined and applied by the minor premise.

To make clear what we are seeking, this must be now said: Deduction is a fact of our intellectual experience, and we naturally arrive at new propositions through its use. In line with what has already been said on the intellect as a faculty for truth, it must be admitted that truth is acquired or can be acquired in this way. Were this not so, the intellect in its natural operation would be erroneous and thus radically not a faculty for truth.

Hence the question here is this: If the conclusion is accepted as true because of the premises, and precisely because of the truth of the major, why is the major premise accepted as true? If the major is the conclusion of a previous deduction, it would be accepted as true because of the major premise on which it rests. Why is that premise then accepted as true? If it is accepted because of a previous deduction, just how far backward is the process to proceed? If it proceeds *in infinitum* or indefinitely, there would never be an intelligent reason for accepting any conclusion. Since that cannot be admitted, we must admit that ultimately deduction rests on some truths which are not themselves conclusions or mediately known truths. That is to say, to avoid an infinite process and to account for the possibility of truth through deduction, we must realize that the process ultimately is founded on and gets its probative force from some truths which are immediately known through a mere analysis and comparison of the subject and predicate.

Such truths are called *analytic principles*. They are called *principles* because from them or in the light of them something else is known. They are *analytic* because the mere analysis of subject and

predicate is enough to manifest their relation—that is, no strict proof or deduction is required in order to know them. Hence, too, they are not mediate truths, but truths naturally and immediately known.

(h) *The Principle of Contradiction.* It should be noted that we have in no way determined just what these analytic principles are; all that has been seen is that there must be some such principles, or else deduction is impossible and no proved conclusion can be accepted.

However, to single out one such principle for special consideration and explication we can turn to the principle of contradiction (or of noncontradiction, as it is frequently called). This, in so far as it is said to be a *law of reality* (ontological principle), can be enunciated in the following terms: A thing cannot simultaneously and under the same aspect be and not be. As a *law of the mind* (logical principle) it can be formulated thus: A predicate cannot be simultaneously affirmed and denied of any one subject.

That this principle is a law of the mind is manifest from the fact that every judgment is a determinate statement about a determined subject, and hence to have any meaning it must involve the rejection of its opposite as false. Thus if I say that the atom can be split, I reject the truth of the statement that the atom cannot be split. That is to say, by every judgment or affirmation I say *what is* concretely, I state something definite about something, and imply that it cannot simultaneously not be what I affirm. Hence, as Aristotle says, by no matter what is said the principle of contradiction is affirmed.

Were this not so, the principle itself could be denied without contradiction. But the very denial would be offered as a statement having a determinate meaning and meant to convey a definite truth. And in so far as that is true, the very attempt to deny this principle necessarily involves its affirmation. Thus the principle of contradiction is a law of the mind.

(i) *A Law of Being.* In line, moreover, with previous analyses it must be recognized that the fundamental reason why this principle governs the mind is because it is the law of *being itself*. The mind knows and judges what is and affirms something determinate because what is is determined and at any given moment is what it is. By knowing, we do not make things to be or to be such and

such, but rather judge them to be because they are. Thus the principle of contradiction means ontologically nothing more than this fact of each being being what it is; being self-identical, it cannot simultaneously be what it is not.

(j) *Most Fundamental Principle.* Furthermore, it can be seen that this principle is the first, the most basic and the most known of all principles. For one thing, the terms in its enunciation are equivalently *being* and *non-being*, the simplest of all possible terms; hence nothing simpler can be found to mediate between them. Thus being is immediately known.

Also, I naturally know this or that being, and that there are many beings with which I am in contact. That I know *many beings* involves the recognition of many *unities*, each distinct or separated from all others. Knowledge of this distinction or division of one thing from others means knowledge of negation. Hence, my immediate contact with the plurality of things means the immediate knowledge of both *being* and *negation*. These are the terms of the principle of contradiction, so even in respect to its terms, the principle is immediately grasped by me.

That it is most known of all principles, no matter what they are, is seen by reflecting on the fact that every other principle must presuppose it, whereas it itself presupposes no other principle. Every valid principle must be concerned with some being or some group of beings; it therefore presupposes being and the basic principle of being which holds true wherever there is being. The principle of contradiction actually presupposes no other principle as such, because apart from it there can be nothing but nonmeaning or self-contradiction, which actually cannot be.

Since this principle is coextensive with being, it is possessed or known in every act of knowledge. It is present in every deduction, and were it to be violated in any process, that process would be invalid. Thus, whereas we saw that deduction must ultimately rest on some analytic principles to have validity, it is now clear that among those principles the principle of contradiction holds first place. Every deduction must ultimately rest on this principle.

(k) *Common and Proper Principles.* Although it is impossible to go into an analysis of other analytic principles at this point (some of them will be analyzed in other tracts), it can be mentioned that other such principles are finality, causality, sufficient

reason, comparative identity, good is to be done and evil avoided, and so on. The principle of identity—what is is—or of the excluded middle—anything either is or is not—are the same in content as the principle of contradiction, and so should not be too sharply distinguished from it. They are really only different formulations of one and the same truth.

The principles just mentioned can be called *common* analytic principles, since they apply to all being or to various sorts of being.

There are also *proper* analytic principles which are formed by an easy, intuitive *application* of these principles to some definite subject matter. Examples are the divisibility of extension, the equality of quantities, the stability of nature, the equality of intensities, and so on.

(1) *No Deduction from Common Principles.* When it is said that deduction must ultimately rest on some common analytic principles, it is not meant that conclusions are ultimately *deduced* from these principles, but rather that they can be resolved into them. So the correct meaning of this *resolution* must be grasped. First, from *common* principles nothing at all can be deduced. Pertaining as they do to being itself, they can be said to be intuitively or directly applied to any particular being or sphere of being. The “inferiors” are actually contained in and known in them, hence there can be explication but no new deductive knowledge in the application to individuals. So in questioning the truth value of any particular conclusion and by saying that it ultimately rests on analytic principles, we do *not mean* that we can show how it is deduced from these principles. We do mean that the conclusion in question can be *resolved into some analytic principle or principles*. Thus, conclusion D is based on a major premise C; C is true because of B; B is deduced from A. This process cannot go on indefinitely. Hence, some premise is accepted because its denial would involve the denial of the principle of sufficient reason, or of the principle of causality, or of the principle of contradiction. In this way the conclusion is resolved into first analytic principles.

Thus, extreme Rationalism is avoided by recognizing that there is no such thing as a common principle from which all knowledge can be deduced—in fact nothing at all is deduced from common analytic principles. The resolute function of the first principles consists merely in the recognition that in the deductive process the

initial premise is accepted as true because its denial would involve the denial of being itself and of its principles.

(m) *Résumé*. By this analysis, then, all we have seen is that the human mind has the power to function reliably in a deductive manner, that in this process it acquires new knowledge, and that new knowledge can be shown to be true by the resolution of the conclusion into first analytic principles. Nor does this mean that such resolution has to be carried out for every case of deduction; that would be endless. What is meant is that in valid deductions this resolution is possible and is the basic reason why the deductive procedure is a basically valid and reliable one.

III • SUMMARY OF THE ANALYSIS

(a) In deduction, since the conclusion is derived from the premises, it must be somehow contained in them. To say that it is contained in them *merely potentially* would not say enough, since this would not include the notion of logical causality.

Nor is it *actually* known either in the major or minor premise. The former contains the subject only in an indeterminate way, not sufficient of itself to give formal knowledge. The latter would provide no knowledge of the predicate. Hence it is not actually found even implicitly in either premise.

However, it must still be said to be contained in the premises in such a way that the conclusion *can* and with logical necessity *must* be admitted once the premises are granted. In this sense we can say that the conclusion is *virtually* present in the premises. Cf. *Analysis* (a), (b), (c), (d), (e).

(b) That the conclusion drawn does provide *new* knowledge is clear from the fact that what was not known and what was only indeterminately contained in the premises becomes now determinately and actually known. Cf. *Analysis* (f).

(c) The truth of the conclusion depends on the truth of the premises, especially of the major premise. To establish the truth of this major there cannot be an infinite process. Hence deduction must ultimately rest on some analytic principles whose truth is self-evident. Cf. *Analysis* (g).

(d) The principle of contradiction is a law of the mind, since every judgment says something determinate about a determined

subject, and hence implicitly affirms the principle. Cf. *Analysis* (h).

(e) The principle of contradiction is primarily a law of being, since the mind in knowing conforms to what is. Cf. *Analysis* (i).

(f) The principle of contradiction is the first, the most fundamental, and the most known of all principles. This becomes clear from reflecting on the fact that its terms are the simplest possible; that knowledge of any being and of a plurality of beings means knowledge of *being* and of *negation*; and that this principle is presupposed by all other truths, whereas it itself does not presuppose any other particular truth. Cf. *Analysis* (j).

(g) There are both common and proper analytic principles. Nothing can be deduced from the common principles, but in their light all knowledge proceeds. Hence they have a resolutive function with regard to deduction, in the sense that ultimately it can be shown that an initial premise is to be accepted or else some analytic principle would be violated. Cf. *Analysis* (k), (l), (m).

IV • THE STATEMENT IN BRIEF

Through deduction new knowledge is acquired in the sense that what was known merely virtually becomes actual knowledge. Ultimately this process rests on valid analytic principles.

V • DEFINITIONS

Deduction: the process whereby the mind goes from a universal truth to a less universal or particular truth.

Formally Known: what is actually known, either implicitly or explicitly.

Potentially Known: that which is not actually known, but is capable of being known.

Virtually Known: that which not only can be known, but which must be admitted if the premises are granted.

Principle: that from which anything proceeds.

Logical Principle: that from which anything is known.

Analytic Principle: one in which the relation between the subject and predicate is evident from the mere consideration of the terms.

VI • SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES

The main objections against this position on deduction and on first principles have been foreseen in the text, but since some of them are constantly recurring, it might be profitable to isolate them for special consideration, even at the risk of undue repetition.

(a) There is no new knowledge got through deduction, since the conclusion is already known in the premises.

REPLY: Until the meaning of being *virtually present* in the premises is grasped, this objection will appear to be valid and unanswered. The fact is that in knowing the major the conclusion is present only in an indeterminate way not sufficient for actual knowledge, and hence is not known. Through the determination provided by the minor, sufficient specification is provided for the intellect now to know the conclusion. Thus if the major and minor are both granted and their interrelation through the middle term is recognized, the conclusion is thereby drawn with logical necessity and new, determined knowledge is attained.

(b) The function of first principles seems to indicate we hold a sort of extreme Rationalism whereby we are able to acquire all knowledge by deduction from all-inclusive principles such as the principle of contradiction.

REPLY: This difficulty totally misunderstands the function of first principles. How we acquire them will be discussed in the next chapter. For the present we need only indicate that knowledge of them has been shown to be necessary. Moreover, nothing is deduced from common analytic principles. Rather, they can be called the *light* shining on all data presented, or the natural bases on which all knowledge rests. In their light and on them as a foundation, the intellect proceeds in its acquisition of truth. Their function is one of resolution, not one of deduction; no truth can ever violate them, nor can any proposition be denied when its denial would deny a first principle. Hence, there is no extreme Rationalism; knowledge still proceeds from sensible experience, and one of its procedures is by way of deduction in the light of first principles. Moreover, deduction is not the only way of acquiring truth, as will be seen in the next chapter.

(c) The principle of contradiction needs to be rationally established, and it cannot hold in certain areas, where indeterminacy prevails, especially in respect to becoming.

REPLY: To be rationally established in this context cannot mean demonstrated, as has already been seen. This principle can be explicated by analysis only and needs no further establishing. The reference to certain *obscure areas* where the principle does not seem to hold merely means that there are areas where we do not know and may never know just how things operate. To go from saying that we cannot determine a mode of operation to the statement that the reality in question does not operate in a determined way is a gratuitous leap. We cannot afford to deny what is obvious for the sake of what is admittedly obscure or even unknown. Not determinable by us and not determined in itself are two quite different states.

Finally, many difficulties are found in the fact of becoming, but nothing which tells against the principle of contradiction. We never experience *pure becoming*, and in fact it is an impossibility. Rather what is had is a *being which becomes*, and that involves no contradiction.

INDUCTION

I • THE SITUATION

(a) *To Examine Bases and Meaning of Induction.* Deduction is not the only sort of ratiocination employed by man as he grows in the possession of truth. It is a fact that if he knows some general truth proper to some subject matter, he can deduce new knowledge relative to some previously unknown "inferior"; and it is a fact that he can form some such universal proper analytic judgments by the immediate application of some common analytic truth to a determined subject matter. But experience shows that these are by no means the only sort of general or universal judgments which we claim to have.

Most of the great scientific advances have been brought about by the use of induction, and it is the basis and meaning of that process which we now propose to investigate. The twofold exaggeration of rejecting induction as a means of ever getting to certain truth, and of accepting too readily what merely appears to be induction, must be avoided. This caution must be observed by those who use and apply induction; our function is to justify the process itself as a basically reliable and fruitful method for the acquisition of truth. From reliable sources we can today find out the melting points of various metals, the boiling points of liquids, the results of certain elements' combining in various ways, and many other facts about the way many things operate. Even in very ordinary knowledge, we can know much about the obvious operations of some things. The question here is how such knowledge is acquired, whether it is reliable, and why.

(b) *Natures and Operations.* In our terminology we can say that what we are discussing is the connection between a *nature* and its *operations*. Thus when it is said that Na plus Cl properly combined will give sodium chloride, or that gold will melt at such and such a temperature, or that water will freeze at a definite temperature under certain circumstances, these are not proposed as mere guesses or as merely probable, but as factual. The scientist may deny that he knows anything about “natures”; from his point of view he may do so, and we need have no quarrel with him over his denial. However, it is up to the philosopher to speak of *natures* as such, to show that there is an underlying “principle” of operation present in each; and much of his knowledge about these natures he must accept from the empirical scientists. That there are natures is a philosophic problem; how things operate is a scientific question; and the relation between the two is again a philosophic question. Thus speaking scientifically, there are no “natures”; but the scientist who would say “There are no natures such as the philosophers discuss,” would be overreaching himself and speaking now not as a scientist but as a philosopher—and at that point we would have to disagree and reject his philosophic position.

(c) *Relation to Empirical Sciences.* This discussion, then, touches very sharply on the empirical sciences and on the general lines of the inductive method or methods so characteristic of those sciences. Rather than conflict, our analyses will equivalently show that the general line of investigation followed by men who engage in scientific experiment is good and reliable because it expresses one of the characteristic ways in which the mind can come to know truths. This does not mean to say that it has always given certitude, or even that it can in many difficult areas ever hope to arrive at certain knowledge.

It does mean that in some cases we have acquired certain truths through induction, that the process itself is basically reliable, and that even where there is little or no hope of success, the investigation is good because underlying it there is a reliable human method.

(d) So we do not want to start evaluating every use of induction that has been made, or to ask the scientist as such to accept our position, but we shall provide a humanly intelligent background for his experiments and for his inductions. There is a community of interests in this question, at least to the extent that whatever the

field of knowledge may be, man must use *human* knowledge, the various aspects and means of which we are analyzing.

II • THE ANALYSIS

(a) *Synthetic Judgments.* Having once acquired the ideas of *whole* and *part*, I can immediately know in general that a whole is greater than any of its parts; having learned the meaning of *spiritual* and *natural immortality*, I can come to recognize that any spiritual being is naturally immortal.

But having learned what *gold* is and what *melting at 467° C.* means, I can think about them indefinitely and I will not discover whether the one is to be affirmed or denied of the other. So, too, in a deep dungeon I cannot tell whether it is raining or snowing or sunny outside, or whether the grass is green or burnt. These and countless similar judgments of fact require experience, and they enunciate a passing state of affairs. Judgments affirming individual passing experiences are called *particular synthetic judgments*: *particular* because they have to do with an individual, passing event; *synthetic* because they are the fruit of experience.

However, our judgments based on experience are not all limited to particular, transitory events. When I say that hydrogen and oxygen in a definite context will result in water, that heavy bodies will fall to the ground, or that fire burns, my statement means more than the expression of something transitory. It really affirms not only that this has happened, but that it is what regularly happens and even that this is what will continue to happen regularly.

Such judgments are called *synthetic principles*: *principles* because they express a universal truth, and *synthetic* because they derive from experience.

(b) *Some Knowledge of Natures Implied in Scientific Studies.* Now the question is: Are these synthetic principles *merely a totalization* of what has happened, do they merely *summarize* previous experiences, or do they indicate the ability of the mind to go much deeper in its knowledge of things?

That something deeper is involved is *implied* by *scientific procedures* as well as by *what has already been seen* in our analyses of human knowledge.

Thus the *empirical scientist* in any given experiment, and espe-

cially in a complex one, takes many things for granted in respect to the materials he uses. He knows just how some of the elements and compounds employed will act and interact, and he does not delay over them, but proceeds to the *new* element which he is investigating. In other words there are many things of which he is already so sure that they merit no more verification. We can say that he is certain about them. Were one to suggest that in given circumstances sodium plus chlorine might not result in sodium chloride, or that it might suddenly change and result in potassium chloride or in sulphuric acid, the suggestion would be ignored. These and similar easy examples from physics, chemistry, and other empirical sciences imply more than the scientist *qua* scientist need admit or even consider; they indicate that some *necessary* characteristic of the material used is known, that something is definitely known about the natural actions and reactions of things, and that these are so well established already that they can be taken as the bases for further investigations. Philosophically we can say that this means that something is already known about the very *nature* of the thing in question. Furthermore, it is known not only that the thing actually *operated* that way, but that the concrete uses made of it in experiments indicate a conviction and a realization that it must and will always operate that same way in similar circumstances.

Thus in scientific procedures we can see that there is *implied* a recognition of the ability to know something about the naturally necessary, determined operations of material things; which means that something can be known in universal fashion about the *natures* which so operate.

(c) *Relation to Abstraction.* Moreover, in what we have *already seen* in respect to the human mind and its ability to abstract the universal from the singular and the concrete is also implied man's ability to know something about natures or essences themselves in the strict sense of the word. That is to say, when treating of universals we indicated that through abstraction we can come to know a thing under one or another aspect, through its perceived characteristics and operations. Much of what is thus conceived may be and is quite transitory and accidental to the *nature* or essential being in question, but some of the characteristics abstracted may be, and actually are, essential to or of the very nature

of the being which is known. By way of example we might say that there at least appears to be a vast difference between the relation of S and P in the statements that "a piece of paper is white in color," and that "a piece of paper will burn when thrown on a bed of red hot coals," or "a stone thrown from the top of a tower will fall to the ground."

Yet granted that through precision we form all sorts of concepts, and granted that some of them seem to be more "important" for the being in question than others, just how do we or can we ever determine that this or that characteristic not only is true of the subject, but is so necessarily true of it that we must admit that it pertains to the thing's very nature or essence? And if we do select some characteristics as necessary or essential, by what right do we do so?

(d) *The Inductive Procedure.* Actually, the procedure goes somewhat like this: I experience this metal expanding when heated; again I experience another metal expanding when heated. The same experience is repeated time and again with various metals and under different circumstances. Finally, I conclude that *metal* expands under heat, meaning thereby that it is of the very nature or essence of metal to so expand. The same is done in regard to falling heavy bodies, to boiling points, and to many easily determined operations. Thus from several or many individual judgments of what has been experienced, I conclude to a general judgment, to a law of nature, that is, a synthetic principle.

Such procedure, however, would seem to be a bit arbitrary. Twenty, forty or even one thousand cases examined are not *all*; in fact no pretense is made to examine *all* possible cases. Hence by what right can we say that from relatively few cases examined I can legitimately infer a universal statement or law?

(e) *Twofold Foundation for the Procedure.* To answer this question it must be realized that there is a *twofold* foundation for the process here in question, that is, for induction, which is the process whereby the intellect proceeds from individual truths to universal truths. By a *foundation* we by no means intend a principle from which these laws can be deduced. Rather it refers to certain *basic conditions* which are fulfilled either in the knower or in what is known.

(1) Thus there is a *logical foundation* on the side of the intellect in the fact that the human mind is capable of distinguishing be-

tween what does and what does not pertain to the nature or essence of the thing. This is due fundamentally to its power of abstraction, and to the recognition that some sufficient reason must exist for the constant recurrence of some same characteristic under varying circumstances. There must be a sufficient reason for the repeated, unvarying experience of a given phenomenon or operation found wherever this or that reality is found. We are capable intellectually of seeing that for certain operations the merely accidental is not a sufficient explanation, and the only way to explain what happens is to admit that the operation is proper to the nature of the being in question. Thus something is known of the nature.

Thus it is of the nature of ordinary fire to burn, of heavy bodies to fall to the ground, and of H_2O and SO_3 to result in H_2SO_4 , and so on.

(2) There is also a *real* or *ontological* foundation for induction, found in things themselves. That is to say, corporeal things exist and act in a definite, determined way, unless something else interferes with them. They cannot suddenly "decide" to act in an arbitrary or novel fashion, since they lack freedom, which alone could introduce such novelty. Corporeal beings are what they are, and necessarily act according to their natures. Sodium, for example, properly compounded with chlorine cannot elect to become gold. The very natures involved preclude any such happening.

The entire edifice of scientific research is reared on this at least implicit conviction, and without it no natural certitudes would be held, nor would so much scientific progress have been made. Progress is made only when previous work does not have to be constantly redone, but when it can be accepted as duly established and reliable for future use.

Nor does this mean that we already know all there is to know about things, nor that every attempt at the knowledge of natures has been successful. In fact there is very much in human knowledge that is quite undetermined—provided the indeterminacy is put in the right place. We do *not* hold that *material things are undetermined*; they are totally and completely determined, and cannot possibly act in a chaotic, disorganized, or arbitrary way. What is undetermined is our knowledge of things; owing to difficulties of experimentation, to the elusive nature of some particles being examined, or to the crudity of even the refined instruments

used, it is not easy and may not even be possible to detect, measure, or in any way ascertain with complete accuracy just how a given nature operates.

All this can be granted, and the fact still remains that corporeal natures in themselves are determined in their being and in their operations (this is known as the *analytic principle of the stability of nature*), and that we can and do know with certainty many things about those natures through their operations.

(f) *No Unjustified Universalizing.* In induction, therefore, we rise from "inferiors" to a general law.

The *motive* or the medium is experience.

Moreover, the process of induction has a firm foundation both in the logical and in the ontological orders. The *logical foundation* is the ability of the mind to determine what does pertain to the nature in question. The ontological or *real foundation* is the fact that natures are determined in themselves and in their operations, so that they act in a given way unless there is outside interference.

Hence there is no gratuitous leap to the universal. What are had are various experiences. These are enunciated in individual judgments of experience. When enough of these are had, the mind can recognize, in the light of the principle of the stability of nature and of its own ability to know, that the only sufficient reason for what has been experienced is that this or that operation or characteristic pertains to the very nature of the thing and hence can be enunciated as being true wherever that nature is found. Hence it is true even of similar individuals not actually experienced.

So induction is more than a mere generalization or summation of previous experiences.

(g) This fulfills all that was originally said about reasoning in general. Induction proceeds from what is already known (immediate judgments of experience) to new knowledge (the general law) by means of an extrinsic medium (experience). It is therefore a valid source of new truth.

(h) *Moral Laws.* With the necessary modifications the same general development can be provided for the acquisition of moral laws; that is, the general enunciations of how free natures (men) will act. Although there is freedom here, and hence man can deliberately choose to act contrary to his nature, still what is natural

for him can be determined through induction. In fact a great deal of our actual living relies upon our knowledge of how men will act in given conditions. Some examples are: mothers love their children; no one tells lies for nothing. Without going into the details of these moral laws, we can mention an interesting point touching on the example of lying. The use of the lie detector is an experimental confirmation of the position that lying is contrary to man's nature. The way this instrument works indicates that it takes an effort on the part of a human being to tell a lie.

(i) *The Number of Instances.* One further question can now be asked: How many instances must be examined before a synthetic principle can be enunciated? To that there is simply no determined answer possible. In practice it will depend on the nature of the thing being studied, on the instruments available, on the acumen of the examiner, on the ease or difficulty of the problem, and on other factors. Nor is it necessary for a theory of knowledge to provide more than the justification for the general process and some indication of how it is to be applied. The application must be made by others. Hence, in general it can be said that as many instances must be examined as are necessary to render evident to a capable investigator the fact that this or that operation or characteristic really does pertain to the very nature of the being in question. Only when that point is reached does the mind feel that it has fulfilled its function and rest satisfied with the results.

Finally, it must be stated that induction is a very varied process; and we have aimed at justifying it basically only, leaving the various techniques for the actual application to individual cases.

(j) *Acquiring Analytic Principles.* Quite different from the inductive process is the way in which analytic principles are acquired. Here, it is true, experience is also required, since we do not derive human knowledge in some *a priori* fashion quite independent of our experiences in this world. But in the formation of analytic principles experience is necessary only to provide the *matter* for the universal judgment, that is, from experience we abstract the subject and the predicate. It does not function as the medium or the motive for the general affirmation, and in that sense no particular judgments of experience are strictly necessary before the universal is affirmed.

Thus I can acquire the ideas of "whole" and "part" only through

abstraction, working on what is sensibly experienced. Once these are had, however, I can immediately see that no limitation to this one being is involved, but that it is rather of the very nature of *any and every whole* to be greater than *any of its parts*, or to be equal to the sum of all its parts. The same can be said of other analytic principles.

Hence, here experience provides the *matter*, that is, the subject and the predicate. It does not provide the motive for linking them in a universal way.

The motive is the immediate intelligibility of the relation between the subject and predicate, once they are grasped. Thus it is said that analytic principles are those in which the relation between subject and predicate is manifest from the mere consideration of the *terms*.

III • SUMMARY OF THE ANALYSIS

(a) There are *particular synthetic judgments*, such as "It is raining," or "This fire is hot."

There are also *synthetic principles*, such as laws of nature or moral laws. Cf. *Analysis (a)*.

(b) Synthetic principles are more than mere totalizations of previous experiences. They give some knowledge of the natures of things.

This is *implied* in the procedures of scientists who accept previously established characteristics as holding good generally.

It is also *implied* in our previous analyses of our power to abstract the universal from the particular. Cf. *Analysis (b), (c)*.

(c) The validity of this process is recognized by reflection on its twofold foundation: logical and ontological.

The process itself involves sense experiences, immediate judgments of experience, and finally the universal or synthetic principle.

Its logical foundation is the intellectual power both to abstract and to recognize the difference between what is accidentally and what is essentially true of the thing in question.

The ontological foundation refers to the "principle of the stability of nature," which recognizes that corporeal natures are determined in their being and in their way of operating.

Hence we can know things as they are, and among their operations we can come to know some which are true of the nature it-

self, and so will be true of that nature wherever it is found. This is, then, not a mere totalization of cases observed, but a well-founded universalizing, and it results in new knowledge. Cf. *Analysis* (d), (e), (f), (g), (i).

(d) Moral laws, relating to the actions of free natures, can also be found by induction, in the same general way. Cf. *Analysis* (h).

(e) Analytic principles are not acquired through induction, but from experience the subject and predicate are got through abstraction. Their relationship is immediately intelligible, and hence all that is required is a consideration of the terms of the relation—that is, of S and P. Cf. *Analysis* (j).

IV • THE STATEMENT IN BRIEF

The truth of synthetic principles is made manifest through induction. The truth of analytic principles is made manifest by a mere consideration of the terms.

V • DEFINITIONS

Synthetic Principle: a general truth, expressing a law of nature or a moral law, having experience as its motive.

Law of Nature: a universal judgment expressing how corporeal natures operate.

Moral Law: a universal judgment expressing how free natures operate.

Induction: the process whereby the intellect proceeds from individual truths to universal truths.

Foundation for induction: a condition which is required for induction to be possible.

Logical Foundation: a necessary condition which must be possessed by the mind. This necessary condition is the ability to know natures and what belongs to them.

Real Foundation: a necessary condition found in that which is known. It is enunciated in the principle of the stability of nature.

The Inductive Process concretely includes abstraction, immediate judgments of experience, application of analytic principles, and the universal judgment.

Analytic Principle: a universal principle the truth of which is known from a mere consideration of the terms.

VI • SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES

(a) To go from particular truths to a universal truth is not legitimate, because in any such process the effect is superior to the cause.

REPLY: If the *total cause* is kept in mind, the difficulty vanishes. The cause is not merely the particular judgments of experience, but it is those judgments seen in the light of the analytic principle of the stability of nature in addition to the intellect's ability to know universals and to determine what belongs to the nature and what does not—that is, the merely accidental. Thus when the point is reached where it is recognized that some trait is of the very nature of the being, one no longer is dealing with an individual *qua individual*, but rather with the individual *qua having such a nature*.

(b) If induction proceeds from analytic principles, then it would seem to be really deduction.

REPLY: There is no question of deducing anything from a common analytic principle, but rather a sort of intuitive application of the principle to the matter in question, and through that application a proper synthetic principle is formed from what has been experienced.

NORM FOR TRUTH AND ADHERENCE TO TRUTH

Having seen that there are various sources from which truths are acquired, it can now be asked if there is one general and final norm which underlies all of them. This is seen to be objective evidence (Chapter Thirteen). Moreover, there remains to be discussed the quality of the assent (doubt, opinion, certitude, and so forth) (Chapter Fourteen), and the reliability of human testimony as a source of knowledge (Chapter Fifteen).

• *Suggested Readings For Chapters Thirteen
Through Fifteen*

Carraghan, Gilbert, *A Guide to Historical Method*, pp. 70-80, 232-320. New York: Fordham University Press, 1946.

Newman, J. H. Cardinal, *A Grammar of Assent*, pp. 240-50. New York: Longmans, Green & Co., Inc., 1947.

Vier, Peter C., O.F.M., *Evidence and Its Function According to John Duns Scotus*, pp. 31-62. St. Bonaventure, New York: Franciscan Institute, 1951.

Wilhelmsen, Frederick D., *Man's Knowledge of Reality*, ch. 14, pp. 165-180. Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1956.

THE ULTIMATE NORM FOR TRUTH

I • THE SITUATION

What we are to consider in this chapter, the universal and ultimate norm for truth, has in a sense already been settled from the first reflex recognition of the existence of truth. However, for purposes of clarification it needs to be treated here in some detail.

By recognizing and admitting the fact that I can know truth I also admit that I can distinguish truth from falsity, and that there exists some speculative norm according to which I thus distinguish between them. Since I can know various particular truths derived from various sources, there must be some special or particular norms which apply to my recognition of those particular truths. Moreover, since my intellect is *one* faculty whose function is to seek and to find truth, there must be one general or universal norm which guides it and beyond which there can be no appeal in its task of recognizing truth and rejecting falsity, no matter what the particular source may be.

It is in view of these brief considerations that we can say already that there must actually exist some universal and ultimate norm in the light of which the intellect recognizes and affirms all particular truths. Hence our main question is not to establish its existence, but rather to determine more precisely just what that norm is and how it functions.

II • THE ANALYSIS

(a) *The Need for Objective Evidence.* Reflecting on individual judgments we see that they can come from various sources: from immediate sense experience, deduction, induction, immediate analysis of the relation between subject and predicate, or from testimony, by which we rely on the knowledge and the truthfulness of some other person. In all these cases, moreover, certain conditions proper to each source of truth must be fulfilled before the "truth" is accepted. However, reflection shows that in every case the object known, or that which is affirmed, is known and affirmed only because it becomes *evident* to the intellect.

That is to say, what is known is *what it is*, and *its being what it is* is brought home to the mind either by induction or by deduction or by sense experience, or in some other way. Until the mind sees what is, it is not determined to judge. When it begins to see what is, it inclines towards making a judgment, and when it clearly sees what is *as it is*, it is determined to judge. To say that "seeing what is as it is" is what determines the intellect is just to admit in other words that the all-pervading or universal norm for truth is objective evidence.

(b) *Further Meaning of Objective Evidence.* By objective evidence, therefore, is meant *a characteristic of reality whereby its intelligibility is presented to and recognized by the mind*. It therefore involves two factors. Primarily objective evidence is a characteristic of the object, and is one with the intelligibility of the object. In this sense we might say that everything is *in itself* evident, since in theory all that is is knowable. But for anything to be actually known this light of reality must be made to shine on the mind, so that objective evidence secondarily involves a relation to the person knowing—it must be presented to and recognized by the mind. Until that is done, we cannot speak of truth as being possessed, and so a norm of truth would have no place.

Hence, objective evidence can be said to be the self-revelation of reality presenting itself to the mind.

Knowledge can be looked upon as a unique sort of dialogue between the known and the knower. Reality speaks or reveals itself—because it is basically intelligible; at times the attentive mind

"hears" what is said and, hearing it, affirms what is said precisely because reality itself has first spoken or presented itself. Thus in judging, the mind says that *this is so* because it knows that this is so. In other words, what is affirmed is affirmed because it is *evident* to the knowing mind.

(c) *Kinds of Objective Evidence.* Since we acquire truth about reality in various ways, it is clear that various sorts of evidence can be distinguished. Thus I can accept as true the statement that "artificial satellites have been put in orbit around the earth," or that a given complicated mathematical computation is correct. Yet what I accept in these and similar cases is surely not evident to me. What is evident is the fact that the authority for such statements is reliable. The statements themselves can be said to have merely *external evidence*; there must be *internal evidence* for the reliability of the authority.

Other truths may be accepted because they have been demonstrated either deductively or inductively. Such conclusions are made evident by the processes used and thus can be and are accepted as evident. However, their evidence is *mediate*. As all demonstration derives its strength from the immediate analytic principles on which it rests, so, too, all mediate evidence is ultimately accepted because of the immediate evidence of those basic principles.

Finally, therefore, there is the *immediate evidence* of immediate judgments of sense experience and of universal analytic principles. For the statement that "it is now raining" or that "I am writing on this paper," no further appeal is necessary beyond the reality which immediately presents itself to my senses. For the statement that "a whole is greater than any of its parts," or that "a circle is not a square," no appeal is necessary beyond the reality which immediately presents itself to my intellect in understanding the subject and predicate.

(d) *Relation Between These Kinds of Evidence.* Beyond this sort of evidence one cannot and need not go in seeking a norm for truth. External evidence relies on internal evidence. Internal evidence which is mediate ultimately rests on evidence which is immediate. Immediate evidence of sensation or intellection is the ultimate reason one can have for accepting any truth, and all truth eventually rests on it.

This can be illustrated by a slightly different reflection on the intellect and the meaning of its judgment. The mind is a "seeing" faculty which does not create but recognizes and affirms reality. For this to happen, reality must become "visible" or manifest itself as it is to the mind. When it does this through some intermediary, the latter must be immediately knowable or rest on something which is so knowable, else there would be an infinite process backward. When what-is manifests itself as immediately knowable, the mind clearly "sees" and judges. Thus immediate evidence is a sufficient and ultimate norm for truth.

As was seen before in discussing deduction, the fact that each case of valid deduction can be "resolved" into first principles does not mean that such resolution need be actually carried out in every instance. Therefore even though mediate evidence rests on immediate evidence, it does not mean that in every instance one must trace it back in order to have true certitude. It does mean that the mediate evidence accepted does have a foundation in the evidence which moved one to accept the analytic principles on which the processes rest. However, assent is never justified without some objective evidence, and hence we can say in general that the ultimate and universal norm for truth is objective evidence.

III • SUMMARY OF THE ANALYSIS

(a) Although truths are acquired in various ways, the real function of each way is to present reality just as it is to the mind. Until the intellect sees reality as it is, it should refrain from judging; when it grasps reality as it is, it affirms it in a judgment. This manifestation to the mind of reality as it is, is objective evidence. Cf. *Analysis (a)*.

(b) Objective evidence is primarily a characteristic of the object, but it also involves a relation to the mind knowing. It is a self-revelation of reality to the knower. Cf. *Analysis (b)*.

(c) External evidence is accepted because of some internal evidence. Mediate evidence is accepted because of some immediate evidence. Immediate evidence, in respect to senses or to the intellect, is accepted because it is itself sufficient to determine the intellect. This can be recognized by reflection on the fact that the intellect is not a faculty for choosing but for seeing what is and af-

firming what it sees. When some reality is immediately present, nothing further is needed. Cf. *Analysis* (c), (d).

IV • THE STATEMENT IN BRIEF

The ultimate and universal norm for truth is objective evidence.

V • DEFINITIONS

Norm: that according to which one judges.

Speculative Norm: a norm for distinguishing between truth and falsity.

Universal Norm: one which holds for all truths.

Ultimate Norm: one beyond which there is no appeal, and in the light of which proximate norms function.

Objective Evidence: a characteristic of reality whereby its intelligibility is presented to and recognized by the mind.

External Evidence: evidence which is not found in what is known, but in something else (testimony).

Internal Evidence: evidence which is found in the thing which is known. It is either:

Mediate: that which is had by virtue of demonstration (conclusions) or

Immediate: that which is had when the reality known is immediately present either to the senses or to the intellect (analytic principles and immediate judgments of experience).

VI • SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES

(a) The explanation given in this chapter seems to mean that objective evidence is the source or principle from which all truth is derived.

REPLY: First of all, there is no such source or principle for human knowledge. It is acquired, rather, from various sources and in ways that correspond to the various sources; for example, immediate sense experience, deduction, induction, immediate analysis of S and P, and authority. First analytic principles serve for purposes of resolution, not of deduction. Moreover, objec-

tive evidence is not a principle at all; it is rather the *precise reason* why each and every truth is ultimately accepted. It is a characteristic of what is known, not a source of what is known. It adds nothing to the reality of what is, but simply means that what-is has, in particular circumstances, the characteristic of being manifest to the knower.

(b) Since objective evidence requires that any given reality be manifest to the mind, it would seem that in the last analysis the ultimate norm is actually *subjective*, that is, my clear perception ultimately determines my affirmation or negation.

REPLY: It is true that what-is must be manifest to the mind, and objective evidence does include this relation to the mind as one of its elements; however, that does not suffice to make it a merely subjective norm. Rather, the clarity of my perception is due to the clarity of the object manifesting itself, not vice versa. The object must *be* clearly visible or intelligible in order to beget clear vision or knowledge. Confirmation of this position is had in all studies and research, which are all so many efforts to let what-is speak for itself and answer various questions which are put to it, and so to render itself evident to the inquirer.

TRIPLE CERTITUDE

I • THE SITUATION

(a) *Quality of the Assent.* Having thus far considered the possibility, sources, nature, and ultimate norm for human truth, we can now reflect on the quality of the assent to truth. In the face of a given problem or situation many intellectual reactions are possible. Thus I am capable of *error*, which is a positive difformity between the mind and reality, or of *ignorance*, which is a lack of knowledge. In a given case I may have a slight *suspicion* of where the truth lies, or *positive doubt*, when there are apparently equal reasons for two opposite solutions. Finally, I may express an *opinion*, which means a weak sort of assent accompanied by the realization that I may be wrong.

(b) *Certitude.* Over and above these various intellectual reactions, I can at times realize that I actually do know what judgment is to be made, and I make it knowing for sure that I am right. In this case I have *certitude*, which means a firm assent of the mind to truth with no prudent fear of error. It is this quality of the assent to truth, this *certitude*, which we are to examine in order to understand its nature and to see if it admits of degrees.

(c) *Formal Certitude.* That the practical living of our lives implies many practical certitudes of various sorts is easily seen in our use of fire, electricity, and various instruments, as well as in our trust in other people both for information and for other help. However, our interest is in the nature and possibility of *formal certitude* where the motive for the firmness of the assent is known, and where I therefore know that the certain assent is well-founded.

It will help in this matter to keep some concrete examples in mind, such as:

This man is telling the truth.

Mrs. Doe loves her son John.

This driver will not deliberately seek a collision.

If I step off the roof, I will fall to the ground.

That fire will burn my hand.

This water will boil at about 100° C.

The melting point of gold is about 1063° C.

God exists.

The human soul is spiritual.

The principle of contradiction, or of causality, and so forth.

In such cases, am I *certain* that they are true, and if so, with what sort of certitude?

II • THE ANALYSIS

(a) *The Motive for Certitude.* Considering the meaning of certitude in general as the firmness of an intellectual assent to truth with no prudent fear of error, it can be seen that any such intellectual response perfectly fulfills the function of the intellect. Other intellectual reactions such as doubt, suspicion, opinion, and so on, are not perfect acts of the mind. As a faculty for knowing truth, its ability is most perfectly actuated when it knows what is, and knows that it knows it with no prudent fear of being mistaken. Nothing better can be asked of it.

Concretely, this means that the given reality has revealed itself and the mind has clearly seen what is. In other words, formal certitude can be had only when there is objective evidence for what is known. As was seen before, the human mind is a faculty which *sees* what is, and seeing it must affirm it; as such it can be moved to *perfect* intellectual actuation only when what-is is presented to it with objective evidence.

Hence it must be said that there can be no formal certitude without objective evidence, and that objective evidence is the essential motive for every formal certitude.

Formal certitude, therefore, includes these elements:

(1) negatively, absence of all prudent fear of error;

- (2) positively, determination of the mind to one position;
- (3) positively, some objective evidence which is the motive for the determination of the mind.

(b) *Metaphysical Certitude*. In regard to the list of examples given earlier, one can see that he may be more certain about some than others; hence we now want to consider the various possible types of certitude. Some of the examples given refer to what a free agent will do in definite circumstances (John will not kill me); others refer to how a corporeal being will operate in given circumstances (Hydrogen and oxygen will combine to give water); still others refer to the very essences of things (the Principle of Contradiction).

ANALYTIC PRINCIPLES: If I reflect on my assent to the Principle of Contradiction, I can see that a denial of it is impossible. I am absolutely sure that an exception to it is impossible. And in this case my certitude can be called *absolute* or *metaphysical*.

The same can be said about other first analytic principles, since they refer to the very essence of a being, and an exception is completely impossible. Thus no part can be greater than its whole, every contingent being has a cause, and so on. Any exception to these would violate the very essences of things and hence would ultimately violate the principle of contradiction. The certain assent here is founded on being presenting itself evidently to the intellect, and the necessity of its existing according to these principles is an absolute necessity.

(c) *Mediate Analytic Judgments*. The same sort of certitude can also be recognized as belonging to mediate analytic judgments. If these are derived from metaphysically certain analytic premises, then the conclusion itself is metaphysically certain. For example, let us presuppose that I have absolute certitude that whatever is spiritual is naturally immortal, and that the human soul is spiritual. In this case I would have metaphysical certitude that the human soul is naturally immortal.

(d) *Synthetic Principles*. In the chapter on induction we saw that if that process is pursued carefully, it can at times give us knowledge of the natures of things. We saw that this is actually done in some easy cases. Now to say that we acquire some knowledge of the very nature or essence of a being means that the characteristic so ascertained will always and everywhere belong to that

sort of being. For it not to be true of the being would involve a contradiction, since something essential to it would be missing. In fact, its absence would mean an essentially different being, rather than the one originally in question.

Thus synthetic principles, provided they have been rightly acquired, are metaphysically certain, since they are knowledge about the essences or natures of things. Every such principle equivalently says, "*It is of the nature of x to do y.*"

(e) *Immediate Judgments of Experience.* The same can also be said about these. If I actually feel pleasure or pain, if I am actually writing, or talking and shaking hands with someone, if I actually see and hear rain falling, I cannot possibly deny these immediately experienced sensations and events. To do so would actually be an overt denial of the principle of contradiction. When such judgments merely enunciate *what is actually experienced*, there is no room at all for error or doubt and I have metaphysical certitude about them.

(f) *The Meaning of Physical Certitude.* When I turn, however, to such judgments as: "This fire will burn," "If I step from the boat I will sink into the water," "This metal will expand when heated," or to many other examples of how corporeal things will actually operate, the situation is not quite the same. Here it is not precisely a question of natures or essences, but of the actual operations of those natures.

Since (as will be shown in another tract) things are totally contingent, they require God's activity for the production of their effects or operations. So while leaving the thing *what it is*, God can suspend its proper operation, and in that case we have what is called a miracle. Thus it is of the nature of a heavy body to fall to the ground or to sink in water, yet it can be sustained so that it does not fall or sink. Or it is of the nature of ordinary fire to burn, but God can work a miracle. When that happens the *nature or essence is not changed*, only the operation of the thing does not take place. If a man walks on the water, it still remains of the nature of his body and of water that he sink into it, yet the effect is suspended miraculously.

When dealing, therefore, with corporeal agents and with their natural operations, the opposite is *not* excluded as *impossible* or as contradictory.

Can I then ever have formal certitude as to how these things will act? In answering this question care must be taken to avoid the two extremes of saying that we regularly have such certitude or that we never have it. Since the first requisite for physical certitude is knowledge of a law of nature, and since certain knowledge of such laws is definitely limited, formal certitude in this area is limited. Yet, since some aspects of reality are easily known and some laws of bodies have been fully established, there can be cases of formal certitude.

(g) *Conditions and Application.* The conditions to be fulfilled are simple enough. There must be:

- (1) knowledge of the law of nature (synthetic principle), and
- (2) the clear absence of any reason for suspecting an exception.

If something in the surrounding circumstances suggests the positive intervention of God, it would be imprudent to say that certitude has been reached.

It should be kept clearly in mind that it is to some individual, concrete examples of what will happen that physical certitude applies; and it is had only when the law of nature which applies is known with metaphysical certitude. When the law has not yet been so established, there is only hypothesis and theory and probability. I do not put my hand into a hot fire, because I know that my hand will burn. I do not step off a roof, because I know that I will fall. Many other examples from daily life can be cited.

In these cases I can have *certitude*: a firm assent with no fear of error. It is *categorical*, because I am sure of what will actually happen, not just of what ought to happen. It is *not metaphysical* certitude, since the opposite is not impossible, nor is there any positive motive over and above the law of nature. This type of certitude is called *physical certitude*.

(h) *Hypothetical Certitude.* As distinguished from absolute certitude, physical certitude is called hypothetical, in the sense that the opposite is not impossible, but can be brought about through God's intervention. So the firmness of the assent varies from the firmness had in metaphysical certitude. In the latter the firmness is founded on the absolute necessity of something being essentially what it is; in the former, the firmness is founded on an objective necessity also, and a necessity which is well-founded in its own order, but is hypothetical in the sense that it can be suspended by God.

(i) *Reductively Metaphysical Certitude.* At the same time we can affirm that God will not *generally* or very frequently work miracles in respect to any given nature. This is true because having founded natures, He would be acting contrary to His divine Wisdom and Goodness were he generally to work exceptions. For this new positive reason, the statement that "fire will generally burn" is certain with reductively metaphysical certitude.

SUMMARY: What has been said can be summarized in the following examples, and can then easily be applied to others. Taking one expression such as "fire burns," we can qualify it as follows:

- (1) "It is of *the nature* of fire to burn."

This is a law of nature, a synthetic principle; hence we have metaphysical certitude in making this statement.

- (2) "*This fire* will burn that paper."

This is an individual application of the law; here we have physical certitude.

- (3) "Fire will *always* burn."

This says that the effect will always concretely follow and that there will never be a miracle in this matter; here we have no certitude at all.

- (4) "Fire will *generally* burn."

This relies on the Wisdom of God who will not generally work exceptions; here we have reductively metaphysical certitude.

(j) *The Meaning of Moral Certitude.* Keeping in mind what has already been seen, we can make the analysis of moral certitude a short one. Here it is a question of the operations of a free nature.

It is presumed that by the process of induction some moral laws (that is, how it is natural for free natures to act) have been acquired. These laws, too, are metaphysically certain since they affirm that this or that mode of operation is *natural* to free agents. Moreover, certitude will have to do with applications of these laws to the concrete, singular activity of some individual man.

Thus the statement "No one tells lies without reason," means that "it is of the very nature of man that he does not lie without reason." This does not mean that no man ever has or ever will lie without reason; it does mean that when this is done, a man acts contrary to his nature. Here we are again dealing with hypothetical certitude, and the exception here is due to an abuse of free will on the part of an individual.

(k) *Conditions and Application.* To have moral certitude there must be a *known moral law*, found by induction. There must also be a *clear absence of reasons* for suspecting an exception here and now.

Confidence in the reliability of our knowledge of the way other people act or will act is basic to much of our ordinary living and it plays a big part in the progress of scientific studies. Men have even been put to death on the reliable witness and truthfulness of others. Hence, although the application of formal certitude is much more difficult in this area than it is in physical certitude, it is nonetheless very important.

Countless examples may be proposed. Let us just say that at times I am certain that "this witness is not lying," "this scientist has honestly recorded his findings," "this driver will not deliberately seek a collision," and so on.

In such cases I have *certitude*, which is *categorical*, which is *not metaphysical*, and which is called *moral certitude*.

(1) *Reductively Metaphysical Certitude.* In a way similar to that given above (i), moral certitude can be *reduced* to metaphysical certitude by the addition of a new positive motive to the general law. Thus I can reflect that it is not possible that men generally or as a usual practice abuse their liberty in a given way, and hence I can conclude that moral laws will *generally* be actually followed by men.

SUMMARY: We can briefly exemplify what has been said on moral certitude with the example of men lying gratis, thus:

(1) "It is of man's nature that he does not tell lies without reason."
This is a moral law and a synthetic principle; we have metaphysical certitude.

(2) "This man is not now lying."
This is an application of a moral law; we have moral certitude.

(3) "No man will ever tell lies without reason."
This means there will never be an abuse of freedom in this matter; we have no certitude at all.

(4) "Men will not generally tell lies without reason."
This means there will not generally be such an abuse of freedom; we have reductively metaphysical certitude.

(m) *Certitude Is Analogous.* Clearly in this matter of moral certitude the firmness of the assent is again special and different

from the other certitudes. There can be a firmness, founded on the moral law and the objective necessity which this implies, but since an exception can be had owing to the deliberate abuse of freedom, great care is needed in its use.

It can thus be seen that the motive of certitude is applied analogously to the three varieties discussed; since certitude is the firmness of the assent and this relies on the objective necessity manifested to the mind, and since this necessity is itself different in each case, it must be admitted that certitude is really three-fold. In all cases it can be *formal* certitude, yet the element of firmness is both present in each type and yet differs according to the necessity.

(n) *Certitude Is Not Statistical.* What has been said on physical and moral certitudes must not be confused with "statistical certitude" which has to do with summaries and statistical predictions and which can have many valuable uses. However, it is not necessarily concerned with a strictly *natural* tendency and it cannot be applied to this or that individual with certitude.

III • SUMMARY OF THE ANALYSIS

(a) Since the intellect is a faculty for knowing reality, it is *perfectly* actuated only when what-is clearly manifests itself to the mind. Thus objective evidence is the essential motive for all certitude. Cf. *Analysis (a)*.

(b) *Metaphysical* or *absolute certitude* is had in regard to immediate analytic principles, mediate analytic judgments, synthetic principles, and immediate judgments of experience, since in all these the opposite is excluded as *impossible* in that it would violate the very nature of being. Cf. *Analysis (b), (c), (d), (e)*.

(c) *Physical certitude* can be had in regard to some concrete operations of corporeal beings; for example, this fire will burn, this heavy body will fall if released. The motive is (a) some known law of nature, (b) the clear absence of reasons for suspecting an exception.

Although this certitude is hypothetical rather than absolute, since an exception is not absolutely impossible, it is nonetheless formal certitude and categorical, in that it states what will actually happen; and so the opposite is excluded as impossible, that is, not simultaneously possible.

Reductively metaphysical certitude refers to the fact that natural agents generally will produce their natural operations, since miracles will remain rare exceptions owing to God's Wisdom and Goodness. Cf. *Analysis* (f), (g), (h).

(d) *Moral certitude* is had in regard to some concrete operations of free beings; for example, this man is not lying; this driver will not deliberately seek a collision.

The motive is (a) some known moral law, (b) the clear absence of reasons for suspecting an exception.

Although this certitude is hypothetical rather than absolute (an exception is not excluded as impossible), it is nonetheless formal and categorical certitude.

If it is stated that this or that moral law will not be violated *generally*, this can be called reductively metaphysical certitude, since men will not generally act contrary to their nature. Cf. *Analysis* (i), (j), (k).

(e) Certitude as applied to the three types discussed is analogous, since the same elements (positive and negative) are present in each case according to the necessity on which it is founded. Cf. *Analysis* (l).

IV • THE STATEMENT IN BRIEF

There are three sorts of formal certitude: absolute, physical and moral, each of which rests on objective evidence.

V • DEFINITIONS

Formal Certitude: a well founded firm assent to the truth with no prudent fear of error.

Metaphysical Certitude: firm assent based on the very essences or natures of things. This is called *absolute*, since the opposite is excluded as impossible.

Physical Certitude: firm assent based on the relation between natural causes and their effects. Its motive is (a) a law of nature, (b) the clear absence of reasons for the contrary. This is *hypothetical* in the sense that the opposite is not impossible. But where physical certitude is had, what will actually happen is known, and so the opposite is excluded as impossible,

that is, as not being simultaneously possible. So it is stated categorically, This fire will burn.

Moral Certitude: firm assent based on the relation between free causes and their acts.

Its motive is (a) a moral (not ethical) law, (b) the clear absence of reasons for suspecting an exception.

This also is hypothetical, and yet its opposite is excluded as impossible.

Rests on: that is, is supported by the *motive* of objective evidence.

Motive: the ground or reason which determines a firm assent.

Objective Evidence: a characteristic of reality whereby its intelligibility is presented to and recognized by the mind.

HUMAN TESTIMONY

I • THE SITUATION

(a) *Introduction.* We have considered various ways in which one can acquire truths from personal experience. In all of them, whether immediate judgments of experience or demonstrated truths, whether analytic or synthetic principles, I affirm that something is true because in one way or another it is rendered *evident*. In all of these cases, when the proper requisites have been met, I can be said to have *intrinsic objective evidence*. That is to say, the object itself manifests itself to me and is known by me either mediately or immediately. However, there is a whole realm of truths not included under those considerations.

(b) *Social Aspects of Truth.* We not only live with other men, but also effect a constant social communication of truth. Hence, the question arises as to the precise value of truths received on the testimony of others. Not much reflection is needed to see the very practical importance of this question, in regard to the communication both of events and facts and also of doctrinal matters.

Thus I may not have witnessed a certain event (a hurricane or a fire), but some friend was there and he tells me about it. Or I was never at the south pole, but I do rely on the account given by someone who was there. Again, I learn of the French Revolution and accept it as factual on the authority of historians.

Of great importance, too, is the use made of testimony in doctrinal matters. Take for example a scientific field such as biology. It is true that each student must experientially learn much of the basic matter in this or any other field. However as time goes on

he accepts more and more on the word of competent men in his field. It would be simply impossible for any one man to repeat every experiment required in order to know experientially the truth of all the experiments and conclusions that have been established even in his own field of specialization. The same thing applies to politics, news, economics, to dealing with the members of one's family and with business associates, and to all other branches of human knowledge and hundreds of life situations.

(c) *Progress in Truth.* This, then, is a matter of vast ramifications and of very necessary and important usage in the social and intellectual development of man. We do inherit much; each of us does not exactly have to begin *ab ovo* in our intellectual life. One generation passes on much that it has acquired, and so human knowledge can and does make great strides forward. Were that not so, were there no communication of knowledge, we might all be intellectually still back in prehistoric times.

(d) *Our Aim.* The application of this matter is so varied in both practical daily life as well as in scientific and cultural life, that we can be expected to do no more here than indicate the general characteristics which must be enjoyed by testimony before it can be accepted as a source of certain truth. Moreover, it must be said that before one admits true certitude in any given case, he should be very careful and cautious in his application.

Our concern here, as it has been in other considerations, is to indicate that there does exist this other source for truth, and to point out in general the conditions required for it to be valid and reliable.

II • THE ANALYSIS

(a) *Testimony of an Immediate Witness.* Where someone is reporting to me about an event he himself has witnessed, then at times I can accept what he says as certainly true, if (1) the fact of his testimony is clear, (2) he knows what he is talking about, and (3) he is telling the truth. In such circumstances, he is recognized as being in possession of the truth, and if he tells what he knows, then he puts me in possession of the same truth.

Naturally, the application of these conditions is not always easy, but when and if they are fulfilled, I have with certainty acquired a

new truth. The fact of his testimony is the easiest to verify, since I am either hearing it from him directly, or reading what he has written. So, presuming that I can understand him, I know what he is communicating. Secondly, there are times when I can know that he has knowledge of the event in question; especially when that event was something outstanding or very easy to grasp, and he was in a position to know it. Thirdly, his truthfulness might require more careful consideration, but at times I can be sure from my knowledge of his probity, prudence, and good name, and from the circumstances which hold here and now, that he is actually telling the truth.

At times these conditions can be and are fulfilled, and when they are it means that the witness has knowledge which he truthfully communicates to me, so that I now know some truth which was not the object of my own experience.

(b) *Many Witnesses.* Where the same event was witnessed by many people, and where I receive many *independent* accounts of what actually happened, the degree of my certitude in regard to that event is even intensified. Although in this case there will be and should be a certain amount of divergence in respect to minor details, the fact of substantial agreement in reporting the event will itself require a sufficient reason. And here the only sufficient reason, granting the independence of the various testimonies, must be the truth of the event.

(c) *Remote Events.* In the case of events which happened long, long ago, and in which I do not have immediate contact with the personal witness or witnesses, I am confronted with a situation which requires special study and the special techniques of the historian. All these, including knowledge of sources, the nature of documentation, and so on, are too specialized and difficult to handle here, so we need merely mention that what has to be determined even in these cases is fundamentally the same as what was mentioned above.

(d) *Doctrinal Testimony.* In cases in which what is proposed for my belief is not some particular event but some teaching or doctrine, the conditions to be met are still fundamentally the same. Thus I must know (1) that some doctrine is proposed as being true, (2) that it is proposed by someone who knows what he is talking about, and (3) that it is truthfully communicated.

That some teaching or doctrine is proposed can easily be established. That the person proposing it is competent and has certain personal knowledge of it may not always be easy to verify, but at times I can know it through knowledge of the position of respect which he occupies in his own field, his already proved competence, his modesty of character and his dedication to truth, the importance of what has been proposed, the coherence of what is now taught by him with other truths already known, and so forth. Finally, his truthfulness here and now may be known by me either directly or from knowledge of his dedication to his work, or from knowing his good reputation in his field and the fact that any lying would be ruinous to his authority.

At times these conditions can be and are fulfilled, and so I can accept as true the doctrine or teaching which has been proposed; in so doing I believe the truth of a doctrine on the statement of this doctrinal witness and have acquired a new truth through human testimony.

This sort of testimony is, of course, the sort we mentioned earlier in stating that progress in all sorts of scientific studies would be impossible were there not social communication and acceptance of doctrinal matter. Obviously, doctrinal testimony is not to be accepted lightly, but the growth and the progress of human learning very definitely relies on its trustworthiness. It is true also that this sort of testimony is more easily accepted by learned men than by the incompetent.

(e) *Evidence*. Consideration of what has been said reveals that the truth of the event or doctrine does not, by means of testimony, become intrinsically evident to me; the supposition in this matter is that what I accept is not itself experienced by me. What I myself must really *know* (that is, what must be intrinsically evident to me) is the fact that testimony has been given by one who knows and who tells me the truth. But the truth which I accept on authority remains only extrinsically evident; and so it is by an act of human faith that I accept it. I *know that* it is credible; I do not positively *see what* is believed. Moreover, in line with what was said in connection with moral certitude, it is not always necessary for us to establish with positive proofs the truthfulness of the witness; at times the general truth that men do not as a rule lie without reason, together with the absence of any positive reason

for the witness to be lying here and now, can suffice for moral certitude in testimony.

(f) *Caution Needed.* Naturally, in matters of this sort, one must be very careful to distinguish the emotional reactions or the personal evaluations and commentaries of the witness from the substance of what is presented by him. This is particularly necessary in the evaluation of news accounts, editorials, political matters, and the like. This amounts to saying that although this field of testimony is a fruitful and necessary source of truths which we cannot or have not directly experienced ourselves, it is still a source which must be used with careful discrimination.

III • SUMMARY OF THE ANALYSIS

(a) The testimony of a direct witness to some event can provide me with new truth, if I know: (1) the fact of his giving testimony, (2) the fact that he knows the event in question, and (3) the fact of his truthfulness here and now. I can sometimes know these facts. When many independent witnesses report the same substantial event, my certitude can be even higher. Concerning historically remote events, special techniques must be used. Cf. *Analysis (a), (b), (c)*.

(b) When what is proposed for my acceptance is not an event but some doctrine or teaching, I can be justified in accepting it on authority if I know: (1) the fact of its being proposed, (2) that the one proposing it is competent in the matter, and (3) that he is telling the truth. These conditions can sometimes be met, and so I can at times accept such truths on authority. Cf. *Analysis (d)*.

(c) The evidence possessed for the new truth which is accepted is and remains extrinsic evidence; however, I must have intrinsic evidence for the knowledge and truthfulness of the witness. Cf. *Analysis (e)*.

IV • THE STATEMENT IN BRIEF

Under certain conditions historical and doctrinal testimony can be valid sources of new truths.

V • DEFINITIONS

Testimony: the act whereby a witness transmits to another some knowledge which he has. This can be either historical or doctrinal.

Historical Testimony: that testimony which deals with some fact or event.

Doctrinal Testimony: that testimony which presents some doctrine or teaching.

A Witness: one who transmits some truth to another.

An Immediate Witness: one who has himself had direct experience of the truth in question.

A Mediate Witness: one who himself received from another the truth which he is now transmitting.

Credibility: the sum of those characteristics which render the truth proposed actually believable. It is made up of both the fact of testimony having been given, and the authority of the witness.

Authority of the Witness: a characteristic of the witness which leads to his being believed. It comprises his knowledge (that he was not mistaken), and his truthfulness (that he does not wish to deceive).

CONCLUSION TO PART I

One who has carefully followed the analysis given in these chapters should find himself in possession of a realistic position in respect to knowledge which is neither naive nor over-simplified, but which tries to take into account all the factors of human knowledge and explain them in an objective and coherent fashion.

We began by analyzing the only data available in this sort of investigation, that is, concrete acts of judgment, and from consideration of these acts we acquired some knowledge of the cognitive potency. Speaking in a most general way, we saw that the very making of any act of judgment involves not only a self-awareness, but also a recognition of certain basic truths; this involved a recognition of the truth-capacity of my mind. More specifically we saw that we are capable of knowing objective truth, the object of which is real being, independent of the mind for its existence, and fundamentally intelligible.

In more detail we saw that under limited conditions the senses are reliable sources of knowledge about sensible reality, that universal ideas are acquired by abstraction and yet they represent a nature which is in reality, that even the universality of the concept has a foundation in reality, that truth formally exists in the judgment, that the process of ratiocination involves logical causality, that deduction provides new truths, that induction leads to the knowledge of synthetic principles, that truth can also be acquired from human testimony, when what is known is not itself accessible to me, that the ultimate norm for truth is objective evidence, and,

finally, that there are three kinds of certitude, each of which differs from the others, yet each of which is formal certitude.

Briefly, then, we have examined sensation, conception, induction, deduction, and testimony for their functions as sources of truth.

Although each of these could, of course, provide the matter for long, detailed studies, what has been presented offers a logically coherent, basically satisfactory and experientially well-founded theory of knowledge.

With these general lines sketched and both the power and the limitations of the human mind indicated, the student who has reflected on these matters should have advanced from a naive scepticism or a naive confidence in his knowing powers to a reflective recognition of the basic capacities of the mind in its various ways of acquiring truth, and to the confidence that the human pursuit for truth in the many fields of study open to man is not a futile or unrewarding effort, but one that can and should be engaged in with diligence and caution. He should now have the assurance that truth is neither the arbitrary fiction of a diseased mind nor the unattainable goal of a hopeless search, but a reliable grasp of reality which unfolds gradually and reveals step by step the profound riches of being.

Part Two —————

OTHER THEORIES
OF KNOWLEDGE

AN INTRODUCTORY NOTE ON *PURE POSITIONS* IN PHILOSOPHY

The present section aims at presenting briefly the explanation and evaluation of human knowledge proposed by other philosophers or philosophic schools. In this connection, it must be remembered that it is impossible, in a work of limited scope, to discuss these positions with all the nuances and individuating characteristics proper to each philosopher. Such work belongs rather to a history of philosophy.

For our purposes it will be quite enough if we can succeed in grasping the fundamental tenet, the basic attitude and the central inspiration inherent in each different solution offered. A comparison with medical procedure may help to make this point clear. Just as no two individual cases of tuberculosis are exactly the same, since each has slightly varying characteristics depending on the organism which is affected, and the doctor is perfectly justified in saying that both patients have radically the same disease, so, too, in respect to theories of knowledge, we can admit individual differences of development and emphasis and still detect and indicate a fundamental oneness of insight and approach on the part of several philosophers.

What can thus be isolated and presented as the underlying common explanation or insight in matters philosophical is known as a "pure position." That the consideration of pure positions is a ne-

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cessity in philosophy becomes clear when one reflects on the fact that without them we would be involved in an endless and overwhelming mass of details and individuals. That it is possible has been indicated in the analysis of the mind's power to abstract. That this is a customary procedure can be empirically confirmed by turning to any history of philosophy whatsoever.

We shall proceed, then, to present very briefly various pure positions relative to human knowledge. In each case we shall try to understand the fundamental insight, the reasons which led to such a view, the success of the doctrine in explaining some of the data of cognition, and, when it is required, the failure of the doctrine to explain other data which should have been taken into account.

SCEPTICISM

I • DESCRIPTION

(a) *Pyrrho's Doctrine.* Diogenes Laertius says in his famous *Lives* that Pyrrho adopted

a most noble philosophy, . . . taking the form of agnosticism and suspension of judgment. He denied that anything was honorable or dishonorable, just or unjust. And so, universally, he held that there is nothing really existent, but custom and convention govern human action; for no single thing is in itself any more this than that.

. . . But Aenesidemus says that it was only his philosophy that was based upon suspension of judgment, and that he did not lack foresight in his everyday acts. He lived to be nearly ninety.¹

The doctrine touched upon here is that of Universal Scepticism which teaches that the human mind can never attain to any truth with certitude. Hence, the proper attitude for which one should strive is a total suspension of judgment. The state of mind, then, for which we are urged to strive, is one of universal doubt.

(b) *Not So Extreme in Most Things.* Although it is true that this extreme position has been adopted by relatively few philosophers and by none who can be considered truly outstanding in the history of thought, yet it deserves our attention not only because some few have held it, but also because very many other doctrines are more or less infected with the same basic view. *Insofar* as they share this view, they are subject to the same evaluation.

¹ R. D. Hicks (trans.), Diogenes Laertius' *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1925), II, 475.

(c) *Basically a Respect for Truth.* Although this may sound paradoxical, it does seem that we must admit that the reason for the existence of this doctrine of Universal Scepticism is to be found precisely in the Sceptics' profound respect for truth. They look on truth as so important and valuable that they are unwilling to accept lightly anything which is offered by others or experienced by themselves.

Many of them were struck by the prevalence of error in human knowledge, by the number of positions once dogmatically proposed and later disproved, and by men's readiness to accept as true anything that attracts them. Added to all that is the necessity man is under to establish the reliability of the mind by the use of the mind itself, which seemed to them to be a begging of the question. Moreover, even those who defend the power of the human mind are forced to admit that human knowledge is only partial, and that it only gradually comes to any knowledge of things.

From these and similar considerations they conclude that one can never rest secure in the possession of any truth at all, and that the proper attitude is a total suspension of judgment and an admission of doubt as the most balanced state of mind.

(d) *Inspires Caution.* Although admitting that utter Scepticism is an extreme position, we can also admit that contact with it can help to introduce a healthy note of caution into our own studies and reflections, and can put us on our guard against a too-ready acceptance of "truths." Moreover, in the history of thought it has occasioned profound analyses on the part of men such as Aristotle and St. Augustine relative to some very fundamental truths. In fact, the Scepticism of his day partly moved Descartes to attempt a reappraisal of metaphysics in the hope of finding irrefutable grounds for philosophy.

(e) *As a State of Mind.* What preceded has to do with Scepticism as a doctrine which is proposed for our acceptance. It can also be considered as *a fact*, that is, as an actual state of mind. In this sense a Sceptic is a man who actually doubts everything, or who keeps his mind in a state of suspension from all judging either about speculative or about practical matters. This, then, is nothing more than putting the doctrine into practice.

(f) *Gets at Foundations of Knowledge.* It must be noted that what is at issue here is exactly what was treated in Part One, Chap-

ter One, concerning the general ability of man to know truth. Hence it is not a limited question concerning sensation or conceptualization or demonstration. We must admit that the acquisition of truth is often difficult and in some particular cases it may have to be admitted that success is unforeseeable. Yet we have seen that we do know some truths and do have reliable means for acquiring others. In contradistinction to this view, Scepticism is totally negative; it is radical despair about man's intellectual abilities. As such it can never yield fruitful results in the domain of knowledge.

It is true that some—Pyrrho, for example—felt that not despair but utter tranquillity of mind should be the attitude adopted. But this must still be the tranquillity of emptiness or despair. At any rate even the Sceptics admit that in actual fact they have to live with practical certitude. So their denial centers around speculative truths, and this denial they propose as a doctrine.

II • THE ANALYSIS

(a) *Speculative Certitudes Implied.* Turning first to Scepticism as a fact (that is, an actual mental state of universal doubting) we can start by accepting an admission made by the Sceptics that even they have to live with “practical” certitudes. By this is meant that in ordinary daily living and acting they must proceed “as if” there were some human truth and certitude, even though there actually is none.

However, this very living and acting with “practical” certitudes does necessarily involve some “speculative” certitudes. Thus failure to walk off a cliff or into a ditch, keeping out of the path of a train or an auto, eating food and avoiding poisons, all indicate a general knowledge of and distinction between things to be sought after and things to be avoided. Hence, at least a speculative value judgment of general implications lies at the roots of these practical decisions. They imply the speculative certitudes that harmful things are to be avoided and helpful things are to be desired. The same can easily be illustrated by other “practical” certitudes which involve speculative certitudes.

(b) *Total Scepticism Impossible.* Again, if we limit our consideration to doubt in the speculative order only, this proposal of doubt implies a recognition not only of the fact of doubt but also

of the existence of serious reasons for embracing this attitude. It also involves knowledge of the difference between the states of certitude and doubt, and of the conditions which must be met before a firm assent is given. Thus there is an admission that the intellect should seek conformity with reality and that it can be moved to assent only by objectively valid motives.

(c) *A Self-Defeating Doctrine.* Looking now at Scepticism as a general doctrine to be taught or as a general theory of knowledge, we can see that it proposes a definite teaching on the nature of human knowledge. Its stand is that nothing is certain, and this doctrine it proposes as a tenet we should all adopt.

In other words, a clearly determined doctrine with a clearly determined meaning is proposed. Thus stated it means that Scepticism is certainly the true explanation of human knowledge, and hence one thing is exempt from the total incertitude of our knowledge—Scepticism itself.

However, if this is the case, not everything is uncertain; we are freed from the need of doubting about Scepticism itself, and hence Scepticism overcomes its own doctrine.

In this sense, Scepticism is self-defeating and self-destructive, since its assertion implies its own negation.

Nor is the situation saved for Scepticism by the assertion that it is proposed only as a probability or as a mere conjecture, for even in that case, as Aristotle insists, something having a determined meaning is proposed, and the very determinateness of the meaning involves some certitude, that is, what is proposed as merely probable or conjectural has *this* or *that* determined and, hence, certain meaning. Without a determined meaning no position at all is taken and no doctrine is proposed.

(d) *Overcoming Scepticism.* What has been done, then, is to approach this matter from the point of view of the Sceptics themselves, to accept, for the sake of discussion, the points which they themselves make, and then to point out how their own assertions actually mean that their doctrine is self-destructive and that universal adherence to this state of mind is impossible. In this sense it can be said that at least in a theoretical way the Sceptic can be brought to see that the human mind is really capable of truth.

III • SUMMARY OF THE ANALYSIS

(a) Since Sceptics admit that they live with practical certitudes, and since these imply some speculative certitudes, it must be admitted that Sceptics, too, implicitly admit some speculative certitudes. Cf. *Analysis (a)*.

(b) Speculative doubt necessarily involves some speculative certitudes and some knowledge of the nature of the human intellect. Hence, Sceptics who profess such a doubt do have some speculative certitudes and some knowledge of the nature of the human intellect. In other words, total Scepticism as a state of mind is impossible. Cf. *Analysis (b)*.

(c) Scepticism as a doctrine teaches that nothing is certain. This position, however, is proposed with a determinate meaning, and hence is self-contradictory and self-destructive. Cf. *Analysis (c)*.

IV • THE STATEMENT IN BRIEF

*Universal scepticism viewed as a state of mind is impossible;
as a doctrine it is self-contradictory.*

V • DEFINITIONS

Scepticism: the profession of doubt.

Universal Scepticism: the profession of doubt in respect to all human truth.

As a State of Mind: that is, as actual doubting. This may refer to doubting either in the practical or in the speculative order.

Is Impossible: no one can actually doubt everything; or no one can be a universal sceptic.

As a Doctrine: as the teaching or theory that universal doubt is to be entertained.

Self-Contradictory: implying its own negation and the implicit affirmation of its contradictory.

VI • SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES

The core of all objections against the position just proposed can be summarized in two brief statements. For reasons of clarity these will be mentioned and answered in a few words.

(a) The senses have frequently led us into error, and so we should put no confidence in any of their presentations.

REPLY: There is clearly no denying the fact of error, nor the fact that the senses themselves have often been the occasion for our errors. In fact it seems necessary to admit that the practical living of our lives makes it nigh impossible to avoid all errors. We must make prudential decisions, and often enough without the time or opportunity to get all the facts. If we always waited for sufficient evidence to justify formal certitude, living would be a very heavy burden.

However, the meaning of our position is not that we must always wait for formal certitude, nor that we can in every case achieve such certitude. Our point is that we can and do at times attain a firm possession of the truth. The very admission of error is an admission of this fact.

Regarding the senses and error this can be said: The error has not really been on the part of the senses, but on the part of the intellect judging beyond the evidence. The senses are themselves material and very limited faculties, each of which can operate reliably only within a very small area. They cannot and should not be expected to do more than their nature allows, and one of the functions of the intellect is to recognize these limitations and judge accordingly. Of themselves the senses are highly specialized, and, unless they are diseased, they are naturally competent within their limits. Hence error in these matters is due to my willingly going beyond the evidence in my judgments. The solution, then, is not one of despair in respect to the senses, but one of intelligent control. We are never physically forced to error.

(b) Reason itself is used to justify reason, hence the justification is not reliable.

REPLY: In line with the analyses made here and elsewhere we can now say that no begging of the question is involved in my intellectual recognition of my own intellectual abilities. It is true that

we cannot appeal to something irrational (outside reason itself) for reason's justification, since in that case the nonrational justification would itself need further justification, and no solution would ever be possible. Rather, the procedure must proceed from intellectual acts to capacities, as the data themselves demand.

VII • SUGGESTED READINGS

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METHODIC DOUBT

A. *Methodic Doubt in General*

I • THE SITUATION

(a) *Nonsceptical Doubt.* Having considered the nature and meaning of the doubt proposed by the Sceptics and having decided that such an approach finally implies the negation of what is explicitly stated, we can now turn to consider the method proposed by others whose avowed purpose was to overcome the defeatism involved in the sceptical attitude, and who, nevertheless, wished to approach the problem from the very grounds of Scepticism in the sense that they proposed an initial doubt, methodic, however, in nature, rather than sceptical, as the way to establish the mind's ability for truth.

(b) *Ignorance, Doubt and Problems.* It must first be admitted that in the ordinary sort of problem which arises either in the sciences or in philosophy, the most intelligent approach is by way of admitting either that one is ignorant of the answer, or at least that one has only an honest doubt of what the answer really is. Hence, the fruit of the study and investigation will be the removal of the ignorance or the doubt, and the providing of the correct answer. What we find in many philosophers of the modern era is the desire to approach the question of knowledge in this same way.

(c) *Doubt and Problem of Knowledge.* Thus, without going into the various characteristics whereby we can distinguish one of these men from another, we can first of all consider the very general question of the possibility and validity of approaching the question

in this way. Later we shall consider more carefully the doubt of Descartes and of Cardinal Mercier.

In general then, the approach of methodic doubt means that I must deliberately convince myself that in the matter of the mind's aptitude for truth the best approach is to say that I really do not know even implicitly whether or not I can know truth. I can know only what is in my mind and can know neither its origin in "outside" sources nor its fundamental conformity to that "outside." I thus deliberately choose to doubt about the mind as an instrument for truth, either because there are good reasons for and against it, or because I see no reasons at all for either side.

(d) *Purpose Is Liberation from Error.* It must be borne in mind that this approach does not intend to make us the slaves of error and doubt, but rather to use doubt as an instrument which is to lead us to confidence in our intellect. At the same time it must also be borne in mind that this method is to be used faithfully, methodically, continuously and logically. Since it is the only method allowed, it will not be permitted to smuggle in some other procedure along the line, else one will have been unfaithful to the method.

All this means that a consistent and logically pursued doubt is expected to eventuate in the rejection of Scepticism and in the establishing of my intellectual ability for truth on a firm and lasting basis. Can these two be conjoined? That is the question to which we will seek an answer in respect to Descartes and Mercier later on; but that is also the question to which we now want an answer as it is taken in its general formulation, omitting for the moment the qualifications attached by those authors.

II • THE ANALYSIS

(a) *Begins and Ends in Doubt.* All that we are given to work on here is that my knowledge, not only in some particular applications, but even more in its general capacity for truth, is not to be trusted. In other words, although using the mind to arrive at respect for the mind—and methodic doubt entertains the sincere hope that this respect will be reached—this position states that I should entertain a serious and sustained doubt about the noetic nature of the mind itself. Hence in whatever process I follow,

I must honestly doubt each step taken. Wherever I call a halt to this process, I must still entertain that doubt, because it must logically apply to the last as well as the first step, or otherwise I have somehow ceased to employ the method, and that will call for an examination of what new method I have introduced at that point.

To put it briefly, the method of doubt can lead only to a conclusion of doubt, provided it be logically employed.

(b) *Wants Demonstration.* This procedure is quite different, of course, from what we did in the previous chapter. There we considered the doubt and the doctrine of doubt proposed by the Sceptics and drew our inferences; here, however, we are personally asked to entertain the doubt itself and thus overcome it. Again, we are not saying precisely that this methodic doubt cannot really be entertained in this matter, although that has already been seen to be the case as a result of our previous studies, but we are saying that the method of doubt, once applied to the fundamental capacity of the mind as an instrument for truth and once logically pursued, will lead to no resolution of the initial question.

Hence, although on the surface the method of doubt may seem a more open-minded and frank and honest way to approach this or any other question, it must be admitted that the subject matter being investigated here does not and cannot lend itself to this sort of approach.

This position in its very formulation seeks a strict demonstration to remove the initial doubt. To satisfy that demand it would be necessary to find the proof *outside* the intellect itself, or else there would be a complete begging of the question. That would require some nonrational and nonintellectual instrument of proof. The only alternative is to speak of demonstrating the very grounds of demonstration.

III • SUMMARY OF THE ANALYSIS

Methodic doubt, logically employed in solving the "problem" of knowledge, can only succeed in rendering the solution impossible, since the very method demands that it apply to every step in the process, the last as well as the first.

B. *The Cartesian Methodic Doubt*

I • THE DESCRIPTION

(a) *Intellectual Chaos.* Descartes was a religious man, a capable mathematician, and a serious thinker who was appalled by the Scepticism and Atheism of his contemporaries. Hence, he sought to bring all the powers at his command into a vigorous effort to set a few fundamental truths firmly on a lasting and unshatterable foundation. He was convinced that philosophy had become almost bankrupt because every position imaginable had been already proposed, and every affirmation of a position had been accompanied by its denial. Proofs proposed by one were rejected by another.

(b) *A Fresh Beginning.* He decided that by his day truth and error were so mixed up that it was hopeless to try to disentangle them, and so the best thing was to make an entirely fresh beginning. In his philosophy he proposed to do only three things: to show that the soul is immaterial, that God exists, and that there is an extended universe. What he sought were proofs so clear and so cogent that none would ever again be able to deny these, and that Scepticism and Atheism would thus be forever ousted from the world.

(c) *The Way Out.* As a prelude to his works, Descartes pointed out that he would continue to observe his usual ethical, religious and civil duties so as to continue a peaceful life among men. But apart from those, he would now proceed to doubt everything which he could find a reason for doubting. Hence, he methodically doubted the validity of all sense presentations, all truths got by demonstration, memory, imagination, mathematics, and all other sources.

Most characteristic of his methodic doubt was his decision to treat the probable as false, and to distrust the senses as sources of knowledge. He even went so far as to suppose the existence of some powerful malignant spirit who constantly deceived him in all that he thought.

(d) *One Firm Truth.* This method led him into a very turmoil of doubt, which continued until he found one unshatterable truth: his own existence. With that he felt that he had overcome the

doubt, and could now proceed on that basis to erect his whole philosophy.

His doubt, then, can be described as real, positive, exaggerated, methodic and possibly universal.

II • THE ANALYSIS

(a) *A Reawakening.* Descartes did begin a new trend in philosophy by focusing attention on the importance of analyzing and evaluating human knowledge. Moreover in doing this he stressed the role of the subject in any such study. He also reawakened interest in metaphysics and put a new emphasis on the value of method in philosophy.

(b) *The Fruit of Doubt.* On the other hand, it can be said that the analysis made above on the method of doubt is fully applicable to Descartes' methodic doubt. That this is true is amply confirmed both by the failure of Descartes' philosophy itself and by the fate it met when his devoted followers explicated its logical implications.

(c) *Doubting Existents.* More specifically it must be said that Descartes' method of doubt was applied to *all existence*, and thus one is left with only the ideas of essences and their interrelationships. Hence, in respect to existence, the best one can have is an essentialized existence which may possibly have some meaning in the ideal order, but cannot give contact with the real *existential* self or with any other existing thing. He speaks of the self as a *res cogitans*, and in his context this thinking thing is either nothing more than various isolated ideas or "acts of thought," or, if it pretends to be more and to include the substantial self having these thoughts, it is not justified by his method.¹

(d) *Aware Only of Thought.* Moreover, this thought-thinking fails to explain human knowledge as it is concretely experienced, since human knowledge involves a concrete existing subject *thinking about something*: knowledge is knowledge of an object, not just isolated thought. The knowledge-experience is basically relational, including *knower*, *act* of knowing, and *object* known, and

¹ Cf. F. Copleston, *A History of Philosophy* (London: Burns, Oates & Washburn, Ltd., 1946-59) IV, p. 96.

this is avoided rather than explained by the pure thought postulated by Descartes.

Hence, his type of double *divorced* thought from reality, and instead of explaining it, created a new and an erroneous problem which has plagued modern philosophy. It must be remembered that our analysis has tried to show what the implications and logical results of the Cartesian method really are. Descartes himself clearly intended to arrive at real existents and clearly felt that thought is about something (Meditation III). Whether his method is logically consistent with such desires and claims is another question.

III • SUMMARY OF THE ANALYSIS

(a) Although Descartes fostered interest in philosophic thinking, his doctrine of methodic doubt is open to the same difficulties as were mentioned in general on pages 133–134. Cf. *Analysis* (a), (b).

(b) Descartes' methodic doubt leaves one isolated in the mental order, and hence cannot gain contact with any existent, either the self or any other reality, and hence does not explain what is concretely experienced as human knowing. Cf. *Analysis* (c).

C. The Negative Doubt of Cardinal Mercier

I • THE DESCRIPTION

(a) *Avoid Positive Doubt.* Cardinal Mercier, famous for his efforts at revitalizing Scholasticism, in order both to meet the challenge of Scepticism and to solve the problems of knowledge which had developed from the Cartesian method, proposed that the proper approach to Epistemology was by way of a methodic doubt, but a negative one. This, he felt, would provide the answer sought and would still be worlds apart from the positive doubt of Descartes. He clarifies his position by stating the initial attitude we should have in respect to: (1) our cognoscitive faculties, (2) mediate judgments, (3) immediate judgments;

- (1) The philosopher as he begins the work of reflection, which he undertakes in order to evaluate the nature of certain knowl-

edge, *has not the right either to deny or to declare unreliable, any more than he has the right to affirm, the aptitude of the cognitive faculties for certitude in knowing truth.*

Consequently, the initial state of reflection, with respect to the power of our cognitive faculties, should be *voluntary ignorance, abstention.*²

- (2) Since every demonstration supposes doubt (either real or methodic) about the conclusion to be proved, reflecting reason begins with *doubt* about all *mediate* judgments.³
 . . . we believe that, in facing truth in general, all truth, it is natural and legitimate to *attempt a universal doubt.*⁴
- (3) What is to be the attitude of the spirit in the presence of these *immediate, indemonstrable* propositions? . . . It is legitimate, it is in keeping with the demands of a rigorous critique to *try* to put them in doubt.⁵

In connection with this attempt to doubt immediate truths, he claims that subsequent parts of his work will show that the effort is in vain—they cannot be doubted.

(b) *From Ideal to Real.* To complete our brief look at Mercier's position it must be added that a sketch of his procedure indicates what he has in mind. He begins by stating the problem to be handled (Book I). Next he outlines the conditions needed in order to be able to examine the questions raised (Book II) and points out the two basic problems which he will consider: (a) the objectivity of knowledge and (b) the objective reality of the terms of judgment. He arrives at the objectivity of our knowledge *in the ideal order* (Book III) and finally comes to the objective reality of our concepts (Book IV). (Cf. *Critériologie Générale*, pp. 383–385.)

II • SUMMARY

Mercier proposes that we begin with an elected state of *ignorance*, negative doubt about our aptitude for truth, then that we proceed to justify judgments in the ideal order, and finally that we get to the conformity of our knowledge to reality.

His doubt is methodic, universal, negative, and maybe real.

² D. Mercier, *Critériologie Générale*, 8th ed. (Louvain: Institut Supérieur, 1923), pp. 115–116. Translation mine.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 117.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 119.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 120.

III • THE ANALYSIS

(a) *Same Fruit of Doubt.* This negative doubt as an approach to Epistemology is subject to the same analysis given on pages 133–134, namely: if persistently followed, it offers no logically consistent solution.

(b) *Initial Doubt Unnecessary.* If his position could be interpreted to mean that certain immediate truths in all their implications *fully* withstand the doubt, then it might be acceptable. However, in that case there would have been no need to insist on beginning with the method of doubt, since it would be an admission that it would be not only an unnecessary but even an impossible way to begin.

(c) *Demonstration Impossible.* Furthermore, there still remains the difficulty that merely ideal objectivity must first be shown, and only after that can the correspondence of knowledge be shown through “critical reflection.” This means that a real doubt must be entertained as to the intellect’s capacity, and that this can be removed only by demonstration. In answer we can say that if the intellect is not made to know truth, and if we are not naturally aware of this power, no amount of demonstration could ever avail to uncover it. If it is a natural datum of cognitive experience, it needs no strict demonstration, and if it is not such a datum, no amount of demonstrating will uncover it.

IV • SUMMARY OF THE ANALYSIS

(a) Mercier’s position is open to the same difficulties as were mentioned in general on pages 133–134. Cf. *Analysis (a)*.

(b) No initial doubt is necessary or admissible. Cf. *Analysis (b)*.

(c) The process from ideal to real requires demonstration, and no demonstration is necessary or even possible in this matter. Cf. *Analysis (c)*.

V • THE STATEMENT IN BRIEF

Methodic doubt renders logically impossible any solution to the question of the intellect’s capacity for truth.

VI • DEFINITIONS

Doubt: That state of mind in which a suspended judgment ensues, because of the inability to decide whether the judgment is true or false. Doubt is said to be:

Real: if the mind is actually in a state of indecision.

Fictitious: if it is merely pretended.

Positive: if there are apparently equal reasons for both sides.

Negative: if there are reasons for neither side. (Ignorance)

Universal: if it applies to all truths, or to truth in general.

Particular: if it is limited to some few truths.

Methodic: if it is entertained as a way of getting truth.

Definitive: if it is entertained as a permanent state of mind.

VII • SUGGESTED READINGS

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RELATIVITY OF TRUTH

I • THE SITUATION

The rejection of despair as a justified position and the consequent admission of man's ability to know truth does not yet exhaust the possibilities for new and divergent theories of knowledge. Thus, the very admission that truth is possible evokes the question of what is meant by *truth* in this context. Since on the one hand truth is a very personal possession proper to each knower, and on the other the world in which we live and which we know is constantly changing, is it possible to say in any meaningful way that two men can share the *same truth*, or that one man can communicate the truth he knows to another? Or is each one's truth utterly personal and different and incommunicable? Or should it be said that truth is neither simply "absolute" nor simply "relative," but that further qualifications are necessary?

In facing these questions, and keeping the consideration still very general, we shall first recall some statements made by a few philosophers, and then proceed to analyze the pure position known as Relativism.

II • DESCRIPTION OF THE THEORY

(a) *The Greeks.* Turning to the ancient Greeks we find that according to Protagoras "Man is the measure of all things, of the things that are, that they are, of the things that are not, that they are not."¹

¹ Kathleen Freeman, *The Pre-Socratic Philosophers* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell & Mott, Ltd., 1949), p. 350.

This is generally taken to mean that each individual's perceptions are immediately true for him at any given moment, and that there is no means of deciding which of several opinions about the same thing is the true one; there is no such thing as "truer," though there is such a thing as "better." He was led to this conclusion by observing that material objects are continuously changing, and that the person perceiving them also changes according to his own age, bodily condition and so on.²

Gorgias, another Greek sophist, expressed his philosophical views in his essay "On Being." They can be summarized in the three statements: "I. Nothing exists . . . II. If anything exists, it is incomprehensible. III. If it is comprehensible, it is incommunicable."³

It is notable that Plato nowhere refers to Gorgias' nihilist views, though he devoted serious attention to those of Protagoras; . . . Aristotle, however, took Gorgias' views more seriously, and wrote a monograph (not extant) against them . . .⁴

However one may evaluate the efforts of Gorgias at philosophy, it would at least seem clear that the burden of his essay supports the complete relativity of all truth. For his position seems to be either that we can know nothing as it is, or if we come to know something, our knowledge is so personalized and so proper to each one that it cannot be shared with another.

(b) *An Historical Gap.* Historically speaking it is interesting to note that whereas Relativism exerted strong influence in the ancient world and aroused powerful reactions on the part of Plato and Aristotle, it suffered a rapid decline with the advent of Christianity, and by the middle of the fourth century "it practically becomes *quantité négligeable* and stays underground for some nine hundred years . . . In the fourteenth century relativism reappears . . . but since 1840 it has steadily risen, up to the present time, and it reached one of its peaks in 1900-1920 . . . This means that our ethical (and other mentality) is predominantly relativistic and atomistic."⁵ Although this study presented by Sorokin is mainly

² *Ibid.* Cf. also *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. McKeon, *Metaphysics*, 1005a-1011b, pp. 735-749. Cf. also Plato, *Theaetetus*.

³ Freeman, *op. cit.*, p. 359.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 362.

⁵ Pitirim A. Sorokin, *Social and Cultural Dynamics* (New York: American Book Co., 1937), II, p. 517.

ethical, what he says about Relativism as peculiar to ancient and then after a long gap to modern philosophy, applies also to the knowledge of truth itself.⁶

(c) *Modern Writers.* When we turn, therefore, to more recent philosophers in search of relativistic doctrines, we can find countless examples. Men such as J. Stuart Mill, Comte, Renouvier, and Dilthey, or movements such as Modernism, Psychologism, Historicism, and Scientific Agnosticism could be cited. However we shall limit ourselves briefly to some views expressed by the two American philosophers William James and John Dewey.

(d) *William James.* William James, in his consideration of what it means when one says that truth involves the agreement of our ideas with reality, and speaking in the name of his pragmatic philosophy, says that:

Pragmatism . . . asks its usual question. "Grant an idea or belief to be true," it says, "what concrete difference will its being true make in any one's actual life? How will the truth be realized? What experiences will be different from those which would obtain if the belief were false? What, in short, is the truth's cash-value in experiential terms?"⁷

The truth of an idea is not a stagnant property inherent in it. Truth *happens* to an idea. It *becomes* true, is *made* true by events.⁸

'The true,' to put it very briefly, is only the expedient in the way of our thinking, just as 'the right' is only the expedient in the way of our behaving. Expedient in almost any fashion; and expedient in the long run and on the whole of course; for what meets expediently all the experience in sight won't necessarily meet all farther experiences satisfactorily.⁹

Meanwhile we have to live to-day by what truth we can get to-day, and be ready to-morrow to call it falsehood.¹⁰

Speaking again of Pragmatism he points out that:

Her only test of probable truth is what works best in the way of leading us, what fits every part of life best and combines with the

⁶ Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 230-231. Cf. also Pitirim A. Sorokin, *The Reconstruction of Humanity* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1948), pp. 104-105.

⁷ William James, *Pragmatism* (New York: Longmans, Green & Company, 1914), p. 200.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 201.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 222.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 223.

collectivity of experience's demands, nothing being omitted. If theological ideas should do this, if the notion of God, in particular, should prove to do it, how could pragmatism possibly deny God's existence? She could see no meaning in treating as 'not true' a notion that was pragmatically so successful.¹¹

On pragmatistic principles, if the hypothesis of God works satisfactorily in the widest sense of the word, it is true.¹²

(e) *John Dewey.* Turning now to John Dewey, we find the same general pragmatic attitude toward truth exemplified. There is no truth until "inquiry" has been made or until the idea has been tested by its consequences. Hence all ideas or statements, even of facts, must be considered as mere hypotheses, and in the light of this explanation he works out his theory of "truth."

Here it is enough to note that notions, theories, systems, no matter how elaborate and self-consistent they are, must be regarded as hypotheses. They are to be accepted as bases of actions which test them, not as finalities . . . They are tools. As in the case of all tools, their value resides not in themselves but in their capacity to work shown in the consequences of their use.¹³

If ideas, meanings, conceptions, notions, theories, systems are instrumental to an active reorganization of the given environment, to a removal of some specific trouble and perplexity, then the test of their validity and value lies in accomplishing this work. If they succeed in their office, they are reliable, sound, valid, good, true. If they fail to clear up confusion, to eliminate defects, if they increase confusion, uncertainty and evil when they are acted upon, then are they false. Confirmation, corroboration, verification lie in works, consequences . . . That which guides us truly is true—demonstrated capacity for such guidance is precisely what is meant by truth.¹⁴

(f) *Two Reactions.* Before going on to our own analysis and evaluation of this relativistic position it will be worthwhile to record the reactions of Bertrand Russell and Pitirim Sorokin. In

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 80.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 299.

¹³ John Dewey, *Reconstruction in Philosophy* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, Inc., 1937), p. 145.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 156. For a precise, clear, and interesting presentation and analysis of the doctrines proposed by both James and Dewey, see Bertrand Russell, *A History of Western Philosophy* (New York: Simon & Schuster Inc., 1945), pp. 811-828.

concluding his chapter on Dewey's philosophy and especially referring to the doctrine on truth, Russell says:

In all this I feel a grave danger, the danger of what might be called cosmic impiety. The concept of "truth" as something dependent upon facts largely outside human control has been one of the ways in which philosophy hitherto has inculcated the necessary element of humility. When this check upon pride is removed, a further step is taken on the road towards a certain kind of madness—the intoxication of power which invaded philosophy with Fichte, and to which modern men, whether philosophers or not, are prone. I am persuaded that this intoxication is the greatest danger of our time, and that any philosophy which, however unintentionally, contributes to it is increasing the danger of vast social disaster.¹⁵

Speaking of what present day philosophies need to do if they are to be successfully transformed into helps for cooperation rather than incitements to hatred and enmity, Sorokin says:

They must abandon other forms of ideological degredation of man and sociocultural reality. They must cease the illogical relativizing of truth and other values that leads to the obliteration of the boundary line between truth and error, goodness and evil, beauty and ugliness. The relative has meaning only when contrasted with the absolute. Without any absolute the very concept of the relative becomes empty and meaningless.¹⁶

III • ANALYSIS

(a) *A Common Theme.* Although there are as many variations in the theme of Relativism as there are philosophers who propose it, and the relativity of knowledge is said to be due to reality itself, on the score that it is not intelligible as it is in itself, or to the human mind, on the score that it is not capable of knowing things as they are, and what is said to be true is considered to be dependent on utility, the consequences which will ensue, one's social conditions, or on the personal characteristics of the individual knower, still amid all these variations a common fundamental theme can be detected, and Relativism can be generally described as the doctrine

¹⁵ Russell, *op. cit.*, p. 828.

¹⁶ Sorokin, *The Reconstruction of Humanity*, pp. 116–17.

which teaches that the object of our knowledge cannot be known as it is in itself, but only as it is modified by us, or merely as it appears to us. Hence *what is known* is dependent on the knowing subject.

(b) *Special Emphases.* It must be admitted that this theory of knowledge does grasp and express with emphasis an aspect of the situation which is experienced by everyone in the course of his intellectual development. This can be expressed in various ways:

(1) *It Opposes Rationalism.* The views proposed by Relativists are opposed to an extreme rationalistic mentality which advocates an exaggerated glorification of the human intellect. In this view the mind is supposed to have some sort of direct intuition of essences, to be able to arrive at a comprehensive knowledge of reality in all its relations, and to be capable of developing all-inclusive systems which explain everything. This is to postulate almost divine knowledge for men, and in its opposition to such extreme claims Relativism offers a valuable word of caution.

(2) *It Stresses The Role of Experience.* Moreover, in the growth of Relativism one can detect the influence of modern philosophical Empiricism and of the spirit developed by the rapidly expanding natural sciences. This involves the recognition of the partiality of human knowledge and of the consequent need for constant experiment and unremitting recurrence to experience for the testing and confirmation of positions taken. This also is a point well made.

(3) *It Stresses The Influence of Environment.* Finally, the Relativists have seen that religious upbringing, varying political, economic and educational backgrounds, social conditions, and countless other factors all concretely influence men in their acceptance or rejection of certain positions. These also influence one in how much or little he grasps about various subjects.

(4) *In a Word, It Emphasizes Human Limitations.* By way of summary, we can say that any adequate theory of knowledge must face the fact that: (a) human knowledge is not absolute in the sense of being divine or comprehensive, (b) it must be in constant contact with experience and not devise dreamings of what things would be or try to make everything fit into predetermined categories, (c) it is much dependent on one's training and environment, (d) its truth is a very personal and intimate possession, so much

so that the notion of possession takes on a very special meaning in this context.

(c) *A Necessary Distinction.* However, to be truly adequate a theory of knowledge must also face certain other facts and factors in the human truth-situation. All that has been said pertains only to *the way in which* each one grasps truth; it does not touch on *that which* is grasped. That is to say, the truth-situation includes not only an intellectual act of knowledge, but also a something which is known and which is affirmed *to be as it actually is*. Can that which is known and which is affirmed be mind-dependent, or does truth require an objectivity and an independence of what is affirmed, which would mean that the mind in grasping *what is* conforms itself to it because it is? If truth means this conformity to *what is*, then some objectively stable or "absolute" character must be acknowledged. Thus, if I know that the Principle of Contradiction is true, and another person knows it also, then *what is known* is the same in both cases, although our ways of knowing it may differ somewhat. Again, we affirm that Scepticism is wrong, because it is wrong, that is, *because being is what it is*; and whether I affirm it now or later, or whether it is affirmed by me or others, *that which is affirmed* is objectively and immutably true, and it must be affirmed not because of my way of grasping it, but because of *what is*.

For illustration we can take the statement of a transitory event such as, "There was a World War II." The truth of that judgment in no wise depends on my subjective modifications or on the personality of the person making it, that is, in regard to the truth of *what is affirmed*, nor does it depend on the pleasure it gives me or anyone else, nor on its utility. Rather, what is affirmed truly depends on *what is*.

A full theory of truth, therefore, must keep in mind this distinction between *what is known* and the *way in which it is known*. A certain relativity can be admitted on the subjective side touching the way one knows, but truth must be seen to be objectively absolute in respect to what is known. This need will become clearer in what follows.

(d) *Phenomenalism.* The theory of Relativism means that truth, even in respect to what is known, is dependent on the subject knowing. Hence, the object is never known as it is, but merely as

it appears to the knower and as it is modified by him; and in that sense truth or falsity is never determined by what is, but by the activity of the knower; and this same activity rather than *what is* serves as the norm for truth.

Taken seriously this can only mean that we can never get to know anything definite or determinate about reality, because we are limited only to appearances and our knowledge at best is of phenomena. This total inability to know reality as it is and the consequent lack of determination and of certitude in human knowledge can be said quite logically to share generously in the sceptical despair over human knowledge already discussed. If we can know nothing *as it is*, then we really know nothing and human knowledge ceases to be a cognitive experience.

Moreover, in this context the diligent work of empirical scientists and the studies and reflections of thinking men are equally inexplicable. For what reason do men concentrate their powers on data presented and why do they develop ever more precise and complicated instruments for detecting and recording the data found in reality? It can only be done because reality discloses itself to us, and the more attentive we are and the better our instruments the more it can tell us about itself. We are not satisfied with a first hasty appearance, but apply ourselves attentively to be sure that we really get at *what is*. And even then we can admit that what we have got is far from all that can be learned. Still, the little that we learn is true—it is a characteristic of the object.

(e) *Internally Inconsistent.* Again it can be said that Relativism is an internally inconsistent doctrine. On the one hand it insists that we can never know anything as it is in itself; on the other hand it itself is proposed as the only objectively valid and absolutely true explanation of the truth-experience of man, and as one to which I should conform by admitting its validity. Were the Relativists' position to be adopted, it would mean that any theory of knowledge which is found useful or helpful or any one which appears even momentarily true should be accepted as true. And if that is so, there is no logical reason why Relativism itself should be proposed for our acceptance.

(f) *No Norm for Truth.* Moreover, since there is no objective norm for distinguishing between what is true and what is false, it would follow that there is no discernible basis for distinguishing a true from a false affirmation; hence, one and the same thing could,

with equal truth-value, be at once affirmed and denied. In terms of human knowledge that means intellectual chaos.

This would mean that whatever knowledge a person might presume to have is useless and foundationless. It means also that the efforts made to arrive at scientific knowledge are in vain; and finally, it means that any attempt to communicate knowledge to another is not worth trying. With human knowledge utterly dependent on the knower even in respect to what the object is, human truth is quite literally "dethroned,"¹⁷ and there remains nothing of any value to communicate to others—in fact such communication is meaningless.

IV • SUMMARY OF THE ANALYSIS

(a) Relativism is opposed to an extreme Rationalism, encourages constant recurrence to experience, and emphasizes the concrete influences which come to bear on man's knowledge. In this sense it rejects a false and exaggerated sort of "absolute" in human truth. Cf. *Analysis (b)*.

(b) However, as a theory of knowledge it is one-sided and hence exaggerated in its own way. It fails to take fully into account the experience of knowing as the self-knowing-something. If this has any meaning at all, it means the self becoming conformed to *what is*. Hence, knowledge is simultaneously subjective-objective. Relativism does not first distinguish between *what is known* and the *way in which it is known*, and then retain both sides of the distinction. Cf. *Analysis (c)*.

(c) Relativism means that human knowledge is purely phenomenal, and hence lacks the determination and certitude necessary to overcome a total Scepticism. Since nothing can be known as it is, study and experimentation lose all meaning. Cf. *Analysis (d)*.

(d) Relativism is internally inconsistent, since it is proposed as the objectively valid and true doctrine of knowledge although it simultaneously teaches that there is no objective truth. Cf. *Analysis (e)*.

(e) Since there is no objective norm for truth according to Relativism, the simultaneous affirmation and negation of the same

¹⁷ Cf. Dietrich von Hildebrand, *The New Tower of Babel* (New York: P. J. Kenedy & Sons, 1953), Chap. II, "The Dethronement of Truth," pp. 57-102.

thing could both be proposed with equal truth-value. Hence, knowledge can never be reliable, and communication of knowledge becomes meaningless. Cf. *Analysis* (f).

V • THE STATEMENT IN BRIEF

Relativism as a theory of knowledge is inadequate and internally inconsistent: ultimately it renders human truth meaningless.

VI • DEFINITIONS

Relativism: a theory of knowledge according to which human truth is *totally* dependent on the subjective conditions of the knower.

Totally: not only in respect to *the way in which one knows*, but also in respect to *what is known*. This may be said to depend on utility, effectiveness, pleasure, suitability, "cash-value" or on other factors, but all these are in relation to the knower. In this context, what is known is merely an appearance; the norm for truth is purely subjective.

Inadequate: not taking into consideration all the factors of the experience.

Inconsistent: implicitly denying what it explicitly affirms.

Meaningless: of no real or permanent or coherent value.

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IDEALISM

I • THE SITUATION

Another very influential theory of knowledge in modern philosophy is Idealism. In terms of what has already been said, it can be said that Idealism rejects the despair of Scepticism and the arbitrary and inconsistent meaning of truth found in Relativism. Hence, it admits that man can and does possess truth, and that he knows objects as they are in themselves. However, the question now arises about the nature of those objects in themselves—that is, what is the ontological status of the *something* which is known? The precise interpretation of this question centers around the intramental or the extramental reality of what is known. Put briefly this amounts to asking, can the mind “go out” to a something other than itself and know it as it is, or can that something other “enter into” the mind so as to become known, or *is* there any extramental reality at all?

II • DESCRIPTION

(a) *Illustration of The Position.* Although admitting that Idealism has been a very popular doctrine in modern philosophy, and that there have been as many variations in its development as there have been Idealists, we shall attempt to grasp and evaluate the fundamental insight which underlies and inspires all the varieties. Moreover, although countless examples are available in the works of men like Berkeley, Fichte, Schelling, Hegel, Green, Bradley, Cassirer, Brunschvicg, Croce, Gentile, and so on, we shall content

ourselves with only a few illustrations from the writings of Bishop George Berkeley:

That neither our thoughts, nor passions, nor ideas formed by the imagination, exist without the mind, is what everybody will allow. And it seems no less evident that the various sensations or ideas imprinted on the sense, however blended or combined together (that is, whatever objects they compose) cannot exist otherwise than in a mind perceiving them. I think an intuitive knowledge may be obtained of this, by any one that shall attend to what is meant by the term *exist* when applied to sensible things. The table I write on, I say, exists, that is, I see and feel it; and if I were out of my study I should say it existed, meaning thereby that if I was in my study I might perceive it, or that some other spirit actually does perceive it. There was an odour, that is, it was smelled; there was a sound, that is to say, it was heard; a colour or figure, and it was perceived by sight or touch. This is all that I can understand by these and the like expressions. For as to what is said of the absolute existence of unthinking things without any relation to their being perceived, that seems perfectly unintelligible. Their *esse* is *percipi*, nor is it possible they should have any existence, out of the minds or thinking things which perceive them.

It is indeed an opinion strangely prevailing amongst men, that houses, mountains, rivers, and in a word all sensible objects have an existence natural or real, distinct from their being perceived by the understanding . . . What are the forementioned objects but the things we perceive by sense, and what do we perceive besides our own ideas or sensations; and is it not plainly repugnant that any one of these or any combination of them should exist unperceived? ¹

. . . it is evident from what we have already shown, that extension, figure and motion are only ideas existing in the mind, and that an idea can be like nothing but another idea, and that consequently neither they nor their archetypes can exist in an unperceiving substance. Hence it is plain, that the very notion of what is called *matter* or *corporeal substance*, involves a contradiction in it.²

It is clear that the emphasis in these quotations bears chiefly on the denial of the extramental existence of material substance and on the consequent intramental existence of all "sensibles." This precise point we shall consider a bit later on, turning for the present to the central theme and basic meaning of Idealism.

¹ George Berkeley, "A Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge," *The Works of George Berkeley, Bishop of Cloyne*, editors A. A. Luce and T. E. Jessop (London: Thomas Nelson, 1949), Vol. II, p. 42.

² *Ibid.*, p. 45.

(b) *The Principle of Immanence.* In approaching his study of human knowledge the Idealist places great emphasis on the apparently total heterogeneity of mind itself and what is commonly considered to be material reality which is known. He is convinced that since knowledge necessarily means an identity between the mind and the object known, and since he sees no possibility of identity between spirit and matter, the original, naive attitude of men in regard to the extramental and independent existence of the object must be abandoned, and it must be held that what is known is something totally internal to the mind. So, when we know something, the mind need not be said to "go out" to meet and know that object; in fact there is no such "outside" object at all. More technically there is no *transcendent* element in knowledge (and *transcendent* here simply means independent of or not produced by mind).

As a pure position, then, Idealism is committed to the basic Principle of Immanence according to which the only object knowable is one whose total "being" is its "to be known" and which is consequently internal to the mind itself.

(c) *Idealism and the Ego.* What has thus far been said is the guiding idea of all Idealists, even when one distinguishes them into the two classes of *empirical* and *transcendental* Idealists. The only difference between these positions centers about the interpretation of the knowing *ego*. Empirical Idealism admits the existence of only the individual, actually experienced *ego*. Transcendental Idealism postulates over and above the experienced individual *ego* the existence of a more basic, nonexperienced, underlying *ego*, the source of unity, universality, and necessity. However, the point common to both positions, and the one which interests us, is the denial of any mind-independent thing-in-itself.

(d) *Reasons for the Position.* Among the reasons offered for adopting this position, we can mention the following:

- (1) Insistence on the fact that an object in order to be known must be present within the mind. In the early part of our study we saw that part of the initial meaning of what it is to know does involve the need of an "identity" between knower and known.
- (2) In the knowledge of truth Idealists stress the important place occupied by the knower; that is, were there no knower, nothing would be known. This is expanded to mean that as

the object known is *made known* by the activity of the subject, so its *being* is identical with its *being known*.

- (3) They see a contradiction in the notion of a transcendent or mind-independent being. That is to say, any such being would have to be simultaneously external to the mind and internal to the mind. As transcendent, it would be "outside"; but as known, it would have to be "within" the mind. This dual existence the Idealists consider to be impossible.

(e) *Applications of the Doctrine.* For these and similar reasons the philosophy of Idealism developed, and in keeping with its fundamental principle there emerged explanations and corrections touching on the knowledge situation which can be summarized briefly as follows:

- (1) Although it must be admitted, even by Idealists, that men naturally, spontaneously, and thus, inevitably, tend to be Realists—that is, they tend to look upon what is known as something independent of mind, and something to which mind must conform itself, this realistic tendency must be corrected and recognized as erroneous in the light of idealistic philosophy.
- (2) Hence the ontological situation is not that a thing is known because it *is*; rather it is, because it is known. The act of knowing, then, precedes the being of what is known—in fact, knowledge is an act creative of being.
- (3) Knowledge in this context can be only the pure coming to be of the knowing act itself.
- (4) Truth itself can in no sense find a norm or rule in what is, but it must be measured solely by the activity of knowing.

(f) *Bearing on Ontology.* The preceding is a brief presentation of the basic meaning and implications of Idealism taken as a pure epistemological position. That this theory involves also an Ontology or explanation of the nature of being is perfectly obvious, and since the two are so intimately united, we shall consider several illustrations, accompanying them with brief comments.

With the general assertion that whatever is must be mind-produced, a theistic Realism can express general agreement. This Realism will grant with the Aristotelico-Thomistic tradition that the first Mover (or Creator) must be *nous* or mind, and that all limited or changing beings owe their existence to this mind. How-

ever, the Realist will insist that this does not mean that things exist merely intramentally, and all the more will he deny that things are the product of the individual human knower. In fact he will point out that what we first know are the material, nonmental beings of our experience, and only from a study of what they are can we arrive at the knowledge of an immaterial being to account for their existence.

Another important emphasis in Idealism is the polemic against matter and the insistence that matter is totally unintelligible or even that it does not exist. The Realist will admit that matter as interpreted by the Idealist is unintelligible and moreover that the latter is right in denying the existence of matter as so viewed, for matter, in that sense, would mean mere passivity, a totally inert and static something which would be impenetrable by mind. But the Realist points out that that sort of matter as such does not exist precisely because material existents are not pure matter but material *things*. That is, a material thing is a composite, made up of both act and potency; it is not merely passive or static (a prime matter, in Aristotelian terminology) but in its very nature includes the dynamic act of existing, and of existing and operating in such and such a manner. Hence, material beings are knowable in virtue of their activating and actual perfections, and so from this point of view also, the Idealists have given an interpretation of reality which is only partially true.

(g) *Some Positive Aspects.* In concluding this description it should be pointed out that the Idealists have done well in stressing with great emphasis the need for acknowledging the identity between knower and known, if true knowledge is to be had. Were subject and object totally discrete and separated, were they totally heterogeneous, there could be no such thing as knowledge. Moreover, the Idealists were impressed with the fact that elements such as harmony, beauty, unity, universality, and necessity play a large part in human knowledge, and they are elements which must be accounted for. In their understanding of matter as something totally passive and neutral they not only could not find those elements, but even found them incompatible. Hence they turned to the mind itself for the required explanation, and in doing so, they once again grasped and graphically expressed their views of the dynamic aspects of human knowledge. In doing so they again did a service

to philosophy by opposing the view of mind as a purely passive, static reception of images from "outside," and stressed the activity of mind in its act of knowing.

III • THE ANALYSIS

(a) *A Rejection of Diversity.* Although admitting the value of the emphases just mentioned, and granting that Idealism has done even more than that to further the advance of human thought in the difficult field of philosophy, we must nonetheless examine it carefully to determine whether or not it does justice to the human knowledge experience, and, thus, to decide whether or not it is an adequate theory of knowledge.

The first point to be made is this: Idealism admits the fact that men are naturally Realists; they spontaneously recognize that the object known is *other* than themselves knowing, and they accept as true that which is conformed to what is. However, to explain how the object can be *other*, that is, to admit the diversity between knower and known, is difficult to reconcile with the identity which must exist between subject and object. Because it is *difficult* to explain knowledge realistically, Idealists conclude that it is *impossible*.

This can be put another way: The experienced facts of human knowledge are clear enough, and these include the double factor of identity and diversity between knower and known. These precisely are the factors which have to be explained, and in the explanation it must be indicated just *how* they can be reconciled. To explain the *how* in this context is admittedly not easy. However, explain them both we must, if we are to propose an adequate theory which will take into account the concrete experience along with all its evident data. To say that the realistic explanation is difficult and hence impossible is like saying that to shoot a rocket around the moon is difficult and therefore impossible.

Rather, it must be concluded that human knowledge will never be adequately explained by any theory which suppresses important data and then explains what is left over.

(b) *An Oversimplified Explanation.* It is precisely because of this suppression of certain elements of the knowledge situation that Idealism can be called a naive, over simplified and reductionist

theory of knowledge. Human knowledge is obviously a complex process and a difficult one to explain, precisely because it is a unique experience not paralleled anywhere in the material world. Hence it can be expected to have aspects which are hard to grasp and harder to express. To be honest, we can only take all those elements into consideration and try to find their explanation in a coherent and logical theory. To say that "diversity" introduces an embarrassing element and consequently must be suppressed, is not to explain human knowledge as it is concretely experienced by me or by other men; it is rather to explain it away. Hence, by denying the extramentality of the object known, and by reducing everything to mind itself, one can arrive at a very coherent, logical and convincing theory, but it will not explain human knowledge *as it is concretely experienced*.

(c) *An Inconsistency*. Moreover, in line with what has already been seen in previous chapters, even the Idealists have already admitted a basically realistic position, and to that extent have admitted the untenability of Idealism. What we mean is this: Our analyses have already shown that both Scepticism and Relativism are to be rejected since they are inadequate as theories of knowledge. The Idealist admits this, and in admitting it he admits two things:

- (1) Those doctrines are objectively wrong, and because they *are* wrong in themselves, we must admit they are wrong, that is, the mind must *conform* to *what is* the objective fact.
- (2) Contrary to the relativistic position, it is not enough for me to affirm something which appears to me in order for it to be true. In that minimal sense at least I must submit to what is and thus recognize some transcendence of what is affirmed. Hence, at this point, without going explicitly into the question of sensible or material reality as such, I can still see that insofar as the Idealist admits an objective difference between affirming Scepticism or Dogmatism, Idealism or Realism, so that as a result he admits some of those affirmations to be objectively right and others wrong, he admits that we must conform to *what is* and thus recognize some transcendence of what is. Put another way, we can say that were Idealism right, it would not matter what I affirmed, since my affirmation would make it true, in that knowledge is creative of its object.

(d) *Empirical Idealism Inadequate.* Considering more particularly the position of Empirical Idealism, a brief reflection will show that it is not self-consistent and that it is relativistic.

- (1) Its inconsistency consists in the fact that it wants to teach that there are many individual knowers; however, since everything known is the projection of the individual knower, it follows that even the assertion that there are other persons is itself a projection of the knower. Hence not only are material objects made to be by my thought, but the same is true of other knowers. The result is that the only existent is myself thinking, all else is but a moment in my thought, and I have arrived at a position of utter Solipsism,³ which is a radical denial rather than a coherent explanation of human knowledge.
- (2) It need only be mentioned that since in this idealistic position everything is the projection of my ego, what *I* know is true, and we are faced with a totally relativistic position on truth.

(e) *Transcendental Idealism Inconsistent.* Transcendental Idealism likewise manifests many internal inconsistencies and contradictions, mainly because in its very formulation it presupposes and proposes a realistic basis of knowledge. This can be seen by the following considerations:

- (1) In regard to *objective experience* Idealism holds that our knowledge is creative of its object, that is, only that of which I am conscious actually exists. Now *the fact of my creation of the object known* is something of which I was in no way conscious until the Idealists appeared; hence, according to their system, this creation by mind was objectively true, independent of my knowledge of it, and this, systematically speaking, means the admission of a realistic basis of knowledge by Idealism itself.
- (2) In respect to *the knower* Idealism teaches that there is a common, transcendental knower, and of this, too, I was most certainly not conscious. Hence, this also existed prior to and independent of my knowledge of it. Here again we

³ *Solipsism* can be defined as a doctrine according to which the individual *ego* and its modifications constitute the whole of reality, nothing else having any independent existence.

have a realistic presupposition in an idealistic explanation—hence an internal inconsistency.

(3) Moreover, the *notion of truth* loses all meaning in this system, since the only reality at any given moment is what is grasped at that moment; hence all previous “truths” are submerged or rejected by the one now in possession. This process, however, is a continuous, never-ending one, so that at no moment can I ever say that what I know is definitely true. There is thus no objective truth at all, despite the verbal rejection of Scepticism and Relativism.

(4) *Knowledge itself* ceases, in the last analysis, to be a relational act whereby a subject knows something about an object. To be a subject, in an idealistic context, means “to think,” and to be an object means only “to be thought.” Taken seriously this position leaves us no ground for supposing that there is anything at all beside the *act* of thinking; hence, there is no justification within Idealism for a subject which knows or an independent object which is known. Knowledge thereby ceases to be relational, since the very terms of the relation have no reality.

(f) *Need for Demonstration.* As a final point in respect to Idealism in general, it can be said that it is a position which needs formal demonstration and which cannot be proved except by begging the question. It needs to be demonstrated, since, even as Idealists themselves admit, human knowledge as it is concretely experienced is realistic. Hence, we are by no means immediately aware of the truth of Idealism, and so it must be arrived at mediately, or by demonstration. However, that is impossible, since the only way that it can be explained or proved to be idealistic, is by presupposing that it is such, and by describing it as though it were idealistic—in other words, by begging the question. Were it an adequate and objective theory of knowledge it would, like any valid reflective process, describe the concrete experience as it is, then seek an explanation of the very facts experienced which would be consistent with the data, and finally solve difficulties in the light of what is.

IV • SUMMARY OF THE ANALYSIS

(a) Human knowledge is concretely and realistically experienced as involving both the identity and the diversity of knower and known. Since these elements are difficult to reconcile, Idealism rejects the realistic theory of knowledge. Cf. *Analysis (a)*.

(b) Idealism is a naive and reductionist theory, since it oversimplifies by neglecting part of the data, and explains away the object by reducing everything to mind. Cf. *Analysis (b)*.

(c) In the rejection of Scepticism and Relativism, the Idealist admits some objective truth to which mind must conform, but this admission implies a basic Realism. Hence to that extent Idealism is not self-consistent. Cf. *Analysis (c)*.

(d) Empirical Idealism is basically solipsistic and relativistic, and hence not an adequate theory of knowledge. Cf. *Analysis (d)*.

(e) As a doctrine Transcendental Idealism contains many internally inconsistent elements:

(1) It teaches that knowledge is creative of its object, although this very creation of the object is said to be a fact which was *true*, even though I did not know it.

(2) The transcendental, underlying *ego* which it postulates must also have existed independent of its being known, since the doctrine proposed urges us to accept it as *a fact*.

(3) Truth itself can have no permanent value, since it is only what is known at any given moment and must yield to the next moment.

(4) Since all that exists is the act of thinking, knowledge ceases to be in any sense relational; hence the admission that truth is a conformity between knowledge and object known becomes meaningless. Cf. *Analysis (e)*.

(f) Since the total immanence of the object is not an immediate datum of experience, we must come to know it mediately through demonstration. However, it cannot be demonstrated unless experience is first described in terms of immanence. Hence it cannot be proved without begging the question. Cf. *Analysis (f)*.

V • THE STATEMENT IN BRIEF

Integral idealism, whether empirical or transcendental, is self-inconsistent and inadequate as a theory of knowledge.

VI • DEFINITIONS

Idealism: a theory of knowledge which teaches that the object known is dependent for its reality on the activity of the mind knowing.

Integral: when used in connection with Idealism, positively denying the existence of any thing-in-itself. This is the solipsistic position towards which any Idealism, no matter how qualified, actually tends.

Empirical Idealism: the theory which admits the existence of only the individual, experienced *ego*.

Transcendental Idealism: the theory which admits, over and above the individual experienced *ego*, the existence of a more basic, nonexperienced, underlying *ego*, the source of unity, universality, and necessity.

Self-Inconsistent: implying in its explanation elements which it explicitly rejects.

Inadequate: failing to take into account all the data concerning what is to be explained.

VII • SUGGESTED READINGS

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ACOSMISM

I • THE SITUATION

The consideration of integral Idealism has resulted in the explicitation of the fact that *some* objectivity of knowledge must be admitted, that is, to the extent that the objective falsity of Scepticism and of Universal Relativism, and the objective truth of their denial must be granted. Hence in this minimal sense the truth of some sort of Realism has been recognized. However, the history of modern philosophy has been replete with either a very studied or an out-of-hand rejection of the reliability of sensation as a source of knowledge, and hence, our analysis must be brought to bear on this question. For the present our study will be limited to the question of whether or not sensible reality is recognized as existing. Later we shall consider the question of the nature and objectivity of the sense qualities.

II • THE DESCRIPTION

(a) *Berkeley's Principle.* As was indicated in the previous chapter, the outstanding exponent of Acosmism, the doctrine which denies the extramental existence of a material world, is George Berkeley. Although he himself insists that no one has more respect than he for sense experience and claims to do nothing more than explicitate what every man feels to be true about sensation, it must be admitted that his doctrine has generally been judged to be acosmistic, and it is difficult to gather any other impression from the reading of his works. His new principle "Existence is

percipi or *percipere* or *velle*, that is, *agere*," in view of his own explanations and exemplifications, makes his meaning quite clear.

(b) *Only Spiritual Substances and Ideas.* The basic thesis of Acosmism is that there is no such thing as material reality. All that can be known and all that can be are spiritual substances and ideas. The theory does not claim that man's ordinary experience is an illusion; the illusion enters only when men tend to project their ideas outward and to speak in terms of an independently existing material universe.

How such a position could have logically developed in the history of thought will become clearer after the considerations in the next chapter, but for the present we shall say only that when ideas are made the only objects directly known and are thus said to terminate our knowledge act, it is an easy step to the denial of any material reality beyond the ideas themselves.

(c) *Regulation of Sequence of Ideas.* Acosmism, then, at least theoretically allows that there is a plurality of spiritual, intellectual substances, and that these know only their ideas. It adds that the sequence of ideas is not purely arbitrary, but follows a regular order, usually said to be regulated and determined by the Supreme Spirit, so that we seem to live in an ordered, progressive, developing world. But the only "things" progressing are ideas.

One of the reasons for this position is the claim that "an idea can be like nothing but an idea," so that an immaterial idea can never represent material reality. Hence, the only real things are minds and ideas.

III • THE ANALYSIS

(a) *Truth Means Conformity.* We have already seen that we are capable of a nonrelativistic knowledge of truth respecting something independent of our knowing it, and that knowledge, to be meaningful, has to mean a conformity with what is. Insofar as it does not mean such conformity, it is open to the difficulties already discussed.

(b) *My Knowledge and Sensation.* Without going into the myriad details which can arise on the question of sensation, we can now say that the same thing is true of our knowledge of sensi-

ble reality. If my knowledge purports to be of sensible reality, and if there is no such reality, then to that extent my knowledge has no meaning.

That I do naturally and spontaneously claim to know such sensible reality is one of the most evident facts of my intellectual experience. In fact, my regular experience is such that what I directly and explicitly know with the greatest ease are the material things which surround me. In all my knowledge I find myself in need of some sort of material image to accompany my intellectual knowledge.

Moreover, when I come to know something about "immaterial" or "nonsensible" being, I do so by some sort of comparison to or negation of things sensed. Thus, for example, negative words such as infinite, immaterial, immortal, invisible, inaudible, manifest one way in which I can proceed from the material or sensible to the formation of other ideas. Still others are formed by relation or analogy to sensible things. Finally, even knowledge of our own acts and existence is intimately linked to our awareness of ourselves realized and grasped through our own acts of sensation.

(c) *Judgments About Sensible Existents.* It is a fact of experience, admitted even by Acosmists, that I naturally, constantly and inevitably judge that sensible things do exist in reality as I judge them to be. Moreover, the recognition of error and the existence of doubt in these matters and all the studies of the empirical scientists are so many confirmations of this natural and human conviction.

In these cases, when error is suspected or when greater knowledge is desired, a man does not sit back in the seclusion of his room, close his eyes and shield his other senses; what he does is to apply them ever more attentively to the sensibly experienced reality. He invents instruments such as the telescope or microscope, and he devises measuring tools such as the spectrometer. In doing all that, he is doing nothing more than prolonging and enlarging the range of the senses, since any such instrument would be meaningless without the senses themselves to read and interpret the new data.

(d) *Undermining of Mind.* Again, it can be said that were the Acosmists right in this matter, the senses and man's judgments about sensible reality would be regularly, constantly, and incorrigibly

wrong. We really do experience things as sensibly existent; in fact, that is one of the most basic characteristics of human knowledge as it concretely progresses. Error as to the objective existence of sensible things would mean that human knowledge in its very bases and of its very nature is erroneous. The mind could never be said to know anything, because it could not be trusted. In this sense, Scepticism in respect to the reality of sensible things ultimately involves a Scepticism in respect to the mind's very capacity for truth. It begins as a partial Scepticism, but cannot avoid leading logically to a total Scepticism.

(e) *Data Not to Be Suppressed.* Finally we can point out that behind this idealistic trend in modern philosophy is the conviction that any sort of Realism has to be naive, credulous and unscientific. However, the charge is often made without a sufficient grasp of the nuances of a balanced realistic explanation. It is not naive to affirm that I have the experience of perceiving things as sensibly existent, or of intellectually affirming their reality. That actually is the human experience, and that precisely is the datum which any theory of knowledge must analyze and explain. Hence naiveté cannot properly be said to enter into that admission; it can only be introduced in respect to the *explanation* of the *meaning* of that experience and of *how* it is had.

That explanation, as we have seen, is not easy when all the elements are preserved intact. It becomes relatively simple when some of the data are suppressed, as for example, when the experienced otherness of what is known or the object itself is reduced to the status of a mental phenomenon. Then a coherent explanation can be developed, but it only explains what knowledge would be were it limited to mental beings, whereas the situation to be explained is the awareness of the other as other. A developed Realism seeks to explain this experience, preserving both the immediacy of knowledge and the complexity of the way in which the human person actually knows reality.

IV • SUMMARY OF THE ANALYSIS

(a) We have already seen that knowledge means the non-relativistic conformity with what is. Cf. *Analysis* (a).

(b) I naturally and constantly have the experience of knowing

sensible reality. Material images seem to accompany all my knowledge. I form ideas of "nonsensible" things by relation to or analogy to the sensible. Cf. *Analysis (b)*.

(c) I spontaneously and inevitably judge that sensible things exist in reality. This is further confirmed by the fact that when error is suspected, the reaction is to be more attentive in the use of the senses. Scientific studies and instruments also illustrate the same situation. Cf. *Analysis (c)*.

(d) That being granted as the concrete human experience, it must be said that were the intellect to judge falsely in this matter, the error would be due to the very nature of the mind itself. Basic distrust of the mind in respect to the existence of sensible reality logically means basic distrust of it in its capacity to know what is, so that an initial Scepticism in respect to sensation involves finally a total Scepticism in regard to truth. Cf. *Analysis (d)*.

(e) The fact of experiencing existent sensible reality is part of the data in the noetic experience. It is basic and originaive in respect to human knowledge; hence the function of a theory of knowledge should be to explain *how* we can have knowledge of this *other*, not to oversimplify the given situation by suppressing one of the experienced elements. Cf. *Analysis (e)*.

V • THE STATEMENT IN BRIEF

Acosmism contradicts concrete experience, implies total Scepticism, and oversimplifies the data.

VI • DEFINITIONS

Acosmism: a theory which denies the existence of material reality, and says that all existents are spiritual substances and ideas.

Experience: both sensitive and intellectual awareness of the self and of the other.

Implies: logically leads to if accepted.

Oversimplifies: omits one or other of the elements of the very situation which is to be explained.

VII • SUGGESTED READINGS

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RATIONALISM

I • THE SITUATION

(a) *Descartes' Division of Man.* Whereas Descartes' anthropology will require more detailed consideration in the field of rational psychology, it must at least be pointed out here that one of the outstanding elements of his philosophy is his division of man into two complete and almost unrelated substances. On the one hand he held the *self* to be a spiritual substance whose whole nature is to think; on the other hand he held that the body is a corporeal substance whose essence is extension. Since Descartes looked on these two substances as two complete beings, and since he nonetheless recognized the fact that man experiences himself as a unity, there arose for him the problem of relating the one to the other. Descartes' efforts to solve this problem cannot be called successful. He did insist on the substantial unity of the *self*, the spiritual substance. Moreover, he insisted on some unity of the *man*, and this he called a composite unity. However, as to just what he meant by this "composite unity" he never made quite clear: The unity of man could not be a substantial unity, since it is the unity of two "things" or "beings"; yet he did not want to assert that it was a mere accidental unity, so he invented his composite unity. Actually this was more an evasion than a solution, and it was not long before the fruits of his division were reaped.

(b) *The Sequel: Idealism and Materialism.* Apart from his immediate successors, and in particular Fr. Malebranche, whose Occasionalism showed some of the logical implications of the Cartesian duality in man, there arose in the course of time the two philosophic positions known as Idealism and Materialism. These can be looked

upon as clear expressions of the logical implications of Descartes' doctrine. Whereas he taught that man is two beings instead of one, they reasserted the naturally experienced unity of man's being. However, they did this against the background of Descartes' distinction, and so their reassertion of unity took the form of opting for one or other of the "beings" which he proposed. Thus, according to the Idealists, all that exists is "pure thought" and the experience of a material body is an illusion. For the Materialists all that exists is the body, and the spirit is at most an epiphenomenon of matter.

(c) *Rationalism and Empiricism.* There are still other positions which are possible against the same background, and it is in some of them that we are now interested. While Rationalism and Empiricism do not necessarily require the negation of either soul or body, they do mean for all practical purposes the suppression of the one or the other. Thus in general, Empiricism so stresses the uniqueness of "sense" experience that it rejects the system-building and generalizing functions of the mind, and really reduces all knowledge to what is immediately sensed, although sensation may be variously explained. Rationalism, on the other hand, so emphasizes the intellectual powers of man that it effectively rejects the role of sensation in man's acquisition of knowledge. We shall here be occupied with Rationalism, leaving Empiricism to the next chapter.

(d) *Roots of Rationalism.* For the moment we can say that by Rationalism we mean a doctrine which sees knowledge merely as the unfolding of the mind's innate powers, in such a way that from one or some few self-evident principles all knowledge can be derived without recourse to experience. The roots of this position can be detected in Descartes' statement:

. . . I have taken the existence of this thought [that is, mind or the thinking self] for the first principle, from which I very clearly deduced the following truths, namely, that there is a God who is the author of all that is in the world, and who, being the source of all truth, cannot have created our understanding of such a nature as to be deceived in the judgments it forms of the things of which it possesses a very clear and distinct perception. Those are all the principles of which I avail myself touching immaterial or metaphysical objects, from which I most clearly deduce these other principles of physical or corporeal things, namely, that there are bodies extended in length, breadth, and depth, which are of diverse

figures and are moved in a variety of ways. Such are in sum the principles from which I deduce all other truths.¹

However, the classic expression of Rationalism is to be found in the works of Spinoza and Leibnitz, so we shall turn to them.

II • DESCRIPTION

Benedict de Spinoza (1632–1677)

(a) *Four Ways of Knowing.* Undoubtedly influenced by Descartes' equation of the self with the thinking principle or soul, Spinoza set out to explain reality and man's knowledge of it. The first step in his explanation is to determine the various sorts of knowledge of which man is capable. Next, he evaluates them and determines that the grade of knowledge which perceives a thing through its essence is the best. He goes on to insist that the attainment of this sort of knowledge is within man's competence. Finally, in his *Ethics* he proceeds to apply this highest type of knowledge in his explanation of all reality.

But, before all things, a means must be devised for improving the understanding and purifying it, as far as may be at the outset, so that it may apprehend things without error, and in the best possible way.²

In order to bring this about, the natural order demands that I should here recapitulate all the modes of perception, which I have hitherto employed for affirming or denying anything with certainty, so that I may choose the best, and at the same time begin to know my own powers and the nature which I wish to perfect.

Reflection shows that all modes of perception or knowledge may be reduced to four:

- (1) Perception arising from hearsay . . .
- (2) Perception arising from mere experience . . .
- (3) Perception arising when the essence of one thing is inferred from another thing, but not adequately; this comes when from some effect we gather its cause . . .

¹ John Veitch (trans.), René Descartes, *Meditations and Selections* (Chicago: Open Court Publishing Co., 1952), p. 115.

² R. Elwes (trans.), Benedict de Spinoza, *Improvement of the Understanding, Ethics and Correspondence* (New York: Tudor Publishing Co., 1936), p. 5.

(4) Lastly, there is the perception arising when a thing is perceived solely through its essence, or through the knowledge of its proximate cause.³

As can be seen, then, he pointed out that we have four kinds of knowledge: that of hearsay, that of daily experience, that of scientific proof, and that of an intuitive knowledge of essences. This last he felt was the only truly secure and reliable knowledge, and he proposed to lead men to the acquisition of it. He insisted that we are capable of arriving at such perfect knowledge. His work *On the Improvement of the Understanding* was written in order to show men that their intellects were "sick" due to preoccupation with mere probabilities and the lower types of knowledge and needed to be "healed" by following his method and seeing reality as he saw it.

The fourth mode alone apprehends the adequate essence of a thing without danger of error. This mode, therefore, must be the one which we chiefly employ.⁴

(b) *Intuition of Essences.* The intuitive knowledge of essences to which he would lead us would mean that we would be able to see what things are in themselves and in all their relationships. In fact, a basic principle in his thinking is this: "The order and connection of ideas is the same as the order and connection of things."⁵ That is to say, we should not try to come to the knowledge of causes from the experience of their effects; rather the reverse is the correct way: We can and should proceed from the knowledge of causes to effects. Thus since God is ontologically the First Cause and the One from Whom all else proceeds, knowledge must begin with a knowledge of Him, and from knowing Him all else can be known.

We may add that the idea in the world of thought is in the same case as its correlate in the world of reality. . . . Further, from what has just been said—namely, that an idea must, in all respects, correspond to its correlate in the world of reality—it is evident that, in order to reproduce in every respect the faithful image of nature,

³ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

⁵ *Ibid.*, *Ethics* II, prop. 7, p. 82.

our mind must deduce all its ideas from the idea which represents the origin and source of the whole of nature, so that it may itself become the source of other ideas.⁶

The nature of God, which should be reflected on first, inasmuch as it is prior both in the order of knowledge and the order of nature, they [others whom he considers to be confused in their thinking] have taken to be last in the order of knowledge, and have put into the first place what they call the objects of sensation.⁷

This method he actually employs in *The Ethics*, where he begins with the study of God and proceeds to interpret all else in the light of what has been learned about Him. Spinoza's method is called by him a geometric one, and this appellation refers both to the external formulation and progress of his argument, which uses definitions, axioms, proofs, scholia, lemmata as in geometry, and also to his conviction that his proofs are as convincing and air-tight as any geometric proof.

(c) *Knowing That All Is Part of God.* More concretely, what Spinoza discovers is that there is but one substance, God. "Besides God no substance can be granted or conceived."⁸ The divine substance has certain attributes of which we know only two: thought and extension.⁹ All other "things" are only modes of this one divine substance, falling under one or other of these attributes.

Individual things are nothing but modifications of the attributes of God, or modes by which the attributes of God are expressed in a fixed and definite manner.¹⁰

Thus the soul is a mode under the attribute of thought; all material bodies are modes under the attribute of extension.¹¹ He goes on from this to a most detailed consideration of human life, its

⁶ Elwes, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

⁷ *Ibid.*, *Ethics* II, prop. 10, note 2, p. 86.

⁸ *Ibid.*, *Ethics* I, prop. 14, p. 49.

⁹ *Ibid.*, *Ethics* II, "Prop. I: Thought is an attribute of God, or God is a thinking thing." "Prop. II: Extension is an attribute of God, or God is an extended thing." pp. 79-80.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, *Ethics* I, prop. 25, coroll., p. 61.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, *Ethics* II, def. 1. "By body I mean a mode which expresses in a certain determinate manner the essence of God, insofar as he is considered as an extended thing." p. 78.

bondage and liberation; all of his considerations being deduced systematically from his initial premises. Without going into further detail, it can be seen that this position means that there is really only one being—the one substance, God. All else is a “part” of God, and even “the human mind is part of the infinite intellect of God.”¹² This doctrine has been called both a Pantheism and a Theopanism (all is God versus God is all).

Realizing how strange his doctrine must sound, Spinoza makes this plea:

Here, I doubt not, readers will come to a stand, and will call to mind many things which will cause them to hesitate; I therefore beg them to accompany me slowly, step by step, and not to pronounce on my statements, till they have read to the end.¹³

Gottfried Wilhelm Leibnitz (1646–1716)

(d) *Monads and Substances.* Unlike Spinoza, Leibnitz insisted on the substantiality of individual things in this world. God is not the only substance. However, in his aprioristic explanation of the nature of substance Leibnitz insisted that everything composite must be made up of simples, and everything divisible must be made up eventually of indivisibles. Hence, substances must be simple and indivisible beings, which are also in some sense spiritual in nature. These substances he called monads, and so everything we meet is made up of a combination or aggregation of unextended, simple monads which are dynamic in character. Composites (mere aggregates of monads) are due to the combination of various monads under the direction of one principle (or entelechy) monad for the purpose of clarifying the perceptions of that monad.

The Monad, of which we will speak here, is nothing else than a simple substance, which goes to make up composites; by simple, we mean without parts.

There must be simple substances because there are composites; for a composite is nothing else than a collection or *aggregatum* of simple substances.

¹² *Ibid.*, *Ethics* II, prop. 11, coroll., p. 87.

¹³ *Ibid.*, prop. 10, note, p. 88.

Now, where there are no constituent parts there is possible neither extension, nor form, nor divisibility. These Monads are the true Atoms of nature, and, in fact, the Elements of things.¹⁴

- (1) *Change Means Growth in Perceptions.* In Leibnitz' view the only "change" which takes place in the monad and the only progress made is to proceed from one perception now had to another and clearer one, and each new perception is but the unfolding and flowering of the previous one.

The action of the internal principle which brings about the change or the passing from one perception to another may be called Appetition.¹⁵

Nor does all this mean that he admits any interaction between the monads. Each is a self-enclosed world, so built by God that it mirrors all that is true in its surroundings, yet without receiving any influence or impulse from what is outside itself. Still it is "as if" the others did influence it.¹⁶ Leibnitz admits the influence of only one Monad on others, and that is God, the Supreme Monad, who made all as they are, who gave them their natures, and who thus gave them initially all that will ever happen to them. Their development is just the gradual unfolding or perception of what is already within them. Thus, each substance already contains all that has ever happened to it and all that will ever happen to it.

Furthermore every substance is like an entire world which it portrays, each one in its own fashion . . . It can indeed be said that every substance bears in some sort the character of God's infinite wisdom and omnipotence, and imitates him as much as it is able to; for it expresses, although confusedly, all that happens in the universe, past, present and future, deriving thus a certain resemblance to an infinite perception or power of knowing.¹⁷

As the individual concept of each person includes once and for all everything which can ever happen to him, in it can be seen, a

¹⁴ G. Montgomery (trans.), Leibnitz, *Discourse on Metaphysics; Monadology* (Chicago: Open Court Publishing Co., 1957), p. 251.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 253.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

priori the evidences or the reasons for the reality of each event, and why one happened sooner than the other.¹⁸

- (2) *Human Knowledge.* What has been said on the nature of substance (monad) in the philosophy of Leibnitz implies what is to be taken as at least the ideal in human knowledge. My knowledge proceeds independent of any influence from things, it does not originate with experience, but rather I already know, at least virtually, all that I will ever know. All that is needed is the unfolding and clarification of my present concepts. Thus all knowledge is really *a priori* and innate. So, too, in knowing any individual I can, at least theoretically, know all that has ever happened to *it* and all that will ever happen to *it*. This is based upon his view that all true propositions are analytic in nature, since the predicate is contained in the subject. Of course Leibnitz admits that such explicit knowledge is hard for us to come by, and he somewhat reluctantly admits that we must often accept something only because we see that it happens or has happened; still, the ideal sort of knowledge remains *a priori* and innate.

(e) *Basic Principles.* Behind all that has just been said, and important for understanding the Rationalism of Leibnitz, is the role which he ascribes to certain basic principles. The two first are the Principles of Contradiction and of Sufficient Reason:

Our reasoning is based upon two great principles: first that of Contradiction, by means of which we decide that to be false which involves contradiction and that to be true which contradicts or is opposed to the false.

And second, the principle of Sufficient Reason, in virtue of which we believe that no fact can be real or existing and no statement true unless it has a sufficient reason why it should be thus and not otherwise. Most frequently, however, these reasons cannot be known by us.¹⁹

This same attitude is expressed in another way when he says:

Thus the content of the subject must always include that of the predicate in such a way that if one understands perfectly the con-

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 258.

cept of the subject, he will know that the predicate appertains to it also.²⁰

The ideal of knowledge, then, is to be in the position of being able to contemplate essences themselves in the light of these basic principles, and to be able to deduce from them all the predicates which can ever be applied to them. Naturally, the application of these to concrete existents is not easy, but he feels that some help can be found by the use of another principle, that of perfection. This principle amounts to saying that God always chooses the greatest amount of perfection and produces the best possible world. Thus, if I can know that this or that contingent fact will actually promote perfection, then that fact is true.

Hence it is seen to be most evident that out of the infinite combination of possibles, and the infinite possible series, that one exists by whose means the greatest possible amount of essence or possibility is brought into existence.²¹

Hence, in order to decide whether a given essence does actually exist or will actually exist, all one needs to know is whether its actual existence does or will render the universe more perfect. Theoretically, such knowledge is possible; however, in practice only God has such a grasp of things, and man must fall short of the ideal. So here Leibnitz yields a bit in his Rationalism and appeals, maybe reluctantly, to the need for experience. He admits that in practice we frequently know that the greater perfection of the universe is to be realized by the actual existence of this or that being only from its actual existence. The trouble is that it is too hard for us to know how it will fit in with the universal order of things. So experience tells us that it actually exists; then by principle we know that the reason for that is the fact that its existence does promote universal harmony and perfection.

III • THE ANALYSIS

(a) *The Logic of Ideas.* Although what has been said above is minimal in respect to the total philosophy of these two men, still

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

²¹ M. Morris (trans.), Leibnitz, "On the Ultimate Origination of Things," *The Philosophical Writings of Leibnitz* (London: J. M. Dent, 1934), p. 34.

it is sufficient to illustrate what we mean by their rationalistic attitudes and positions. It also illustrates another general point worth mentioning here. In the dialogue of minds which we see in the history of thought, it is interesting and informative to see certain ideas being developed and carried to their logical conclusions. There seems to be an inner logic of ideas which, once they are proposed, gradually makes itself felt, for even great minds cannot completely divorce themselves from their intellectual environment and background. That is to say, the history of thought is not just the recording of isolated thoughts of isolated men; rather, each inherits much from his predecessors, and each does his thinking under the influence of problems and solutions which are current in his day.

Thus in Rationalism we see the logical fruition of notions activated by Descartes and his successors. If the soul and body are really two complete beings, then it becomes an easy step to insist on their functioning with almost total independence of each other, and so sense experience can logically be said to be relatively unimportant for the mind. If there is a body, its function is not noetic, nor is it related to the noetic. Then one can say that all knowledge is from, of, and through the mind alone. But what can knowledge mean in that context? Since it does not derive from experience, it can be only the unfolding from within of the mind's content, and so the mind is capable of devising intellectual systems, principles, and explanations in a totally *a priori* fashion.

Moreover, in this context it is easy to see with Spinoza that the truest and best and richest idea is the one with which we should begin our reasonings, and we should seek to deduce all else from that perfect idea.

(b) *System and Certitude*. One of the chief insights which these men seem to have had is the need we are under for systematization in knowledge. That man has a natural drive in that direction is a fact of intellectual experience, admitted even by those who for doctrinal reasons reject all system-building. Such work is but the fruition of man's power to abstract and of his ability to gain some knowledge of essences or natures. Lest we get lost in myriad and unrelated singular details, Rationalism is an invitation to recognize and draw value from the power of the mind to construct, to rationalize, to explain, to know essences.

So the laudable goal of Rationalism is to construct a rational,

objective, certain system of philosophical truths, free from all subjective and emotional elements, and one which would be comparable to the objectivity and certainty of mathematics. The wranglings and sophistical arguments and scepticism of much previous philosophizing drove them to desire and to work for the reinstating of philosophy in a preeminent position of respect and honor.

(c) *Neglect of Experience.* However, if we take a general view of the position under discussion and reflect on its implications for knowledge, we are immediately faced with an apparently total neglect of experience. Knowledge is said to be innate knowledge, at least virtually, of self-evident principles from which truths about reality can be deduced. Even when knowledge is said to be occasioned by experience, it is never said to be derived therefrom; rather, knowledge is only the unfolding of reason itself. Hence, Rationalism urges us to seek to view all reality from an *a priori* viewpoint, with the hope of first preparing and developing a system to which reality must then conform. However, that sort of procedure cannot be maintained in the face of a careful analysis of the facts of knowledge.

(d) *Too Exclusively Deductive.* Moreover, the rationalistic mentality is an exaggeration of the human intellectual power. Imbued with the ideal of *a priori* demonstration, it would seek to *deduce* all truth from certain basic principles and to make the order of knowledge the same as the order of being. In another study it will be shown that the ontological order is one in which things somehow proceed from a First Cause, so that in the order of being God first exists, and only secondly do created beings begin to exist. However, man's knowledge does not proceed in this way; we do not first know God and then through Him come to know things. Rather, all that we know, even the most basic principles, is based on and originates in our experience. Only with difficulty do we come to know God, and only by constant labor do we succeed in building up any sort of systematic and coherent explanation of reality. Even the most extreme Rationalists, although retaining the ideal of the *a priori* deduction of all truths, are forced at times to grant some grudging place to experience, since otherwise they are at a loss to explain certain factors in their theories. The embarrassing elements are the contingent facts of daily experience.

These can in no wise be deduced from principles; they must be learned from actual contact. Then, too, it is a fact that we learn many new truths from sources other than deduction, such as induction or testimony.

(e) *Theory vs. Practice.* On the relation between a philosophic theory and reality this can be said: The theory or doctrine proposed must be one which fits the facts as they are actually experienced, and where there is a real conflict, it is the theory which must yield. We are not in a position to concoct theories and then demand that reality conform to them. Rationalism has hit on and developed a partial truth in respect to the dynamic aspects of the mind, but it has exaggerated these to the point where the human conditions for knowledge and its clearly experienced reliance on sense experience have been lost from sight. Thus, Rationalism is a powerful and logically developed theory of what human knowledge would be were it really innate and were we capable of deducing all knowledge from certain basic principles.

IV • SUMMARY OF THE ANALYSIS

(a) Rationalism is a logical fruition of the cleavage introduced by Descartes between soul and body. As a complete being, the soul does not need the body, and knowledge becomes the unfolding from within of the mind's own content. Cf. *Analysis (a)*.

(b) Moreover, Rationalism exemplifies the intellectual power to know natures and to build systems of thought, and in doing so it sought the sort of certainty which would reinstate philosophy in a place of honor. Cf. *Analysis (b)*.

(c) However, Rationalism neglects the role of sense experience, postulates innate knowledge, and develops *a priori* theories to which reality must conform. Cf. *Analysis (c)*.

(d) Rationalism overestimates the role of deduction. Its ideal of the *a priori* demonstration of everything fails to consider other sources of truth, such as sense experience, testimony and induction. Cf. *Analysis (d)*.

(e) Rationalism exaggerates the power of the human mind. Theories must be based on experience, not vice versa, and where there is clear conflict with facts, the theory must yield. In the last

analysis, then, Rationalism shows us logically what human knowledge would be were it innate, rather than what it actually is. Cf. *Analysts (e)*.

V • THE STATEMENT IN BRIEF

Rationalism stresses the active power of the intellect to build systems and to deduce truths; however, it exaggerates the a priori aspects of knowledge, neglects the role of experience, is too exclusively deductive and so cannot be an adequate theory of knowledge.

VI • DEFINITIONS

Rationalism: a theory of knowledge which proposes the *a priori* demonstration of all truths as the ideal of human knowledge.

Deduction: demonstration which proceeds from the universal to the less universal or particular.

A Priori: prior to and independent of experience.

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EMPIRICISM

I • THE SITUATION

Having seen how the rationalistic viewpoint tends to exaggerate the power of the human intellect to know truth and to concoct systems explicative of all reality to which reality itself must conform, we now turn to examine a reaction against that mentality in the name of experience. The classical period expressive of this empirical stress is to be found in seventeenth and eighteenth century England, typified by the works of John Locke, George Berkeley and David Hume. However, the influence of that viewpoint was by no means exhausted with their death; rather it has ever since profoundly influenced the scientific and philosophic mentality of the modern era. In fact it is true to say that it is largely due to the inspiration of Empiricism that modern scientific endeavors have been so diligently pursued, just as it is true to say that the sciences themselves have been one of the factors influencing the empirical mentality in philosophy. The keynote of this outlook is emphasis on experience, but on experience taken in one very definite meaning.

II • THE DESCRIPTION

A. *John Locke* (1632-1704)

(a) *His Purpose.* According to Locke too much time and effort had been spent on the elaboration of systems grandiose in conception and brilliant in execution but lamentably unfaithful both to

reality itself and to the power of the human intellect to know truth. Hence, he proposes that we follow a more humble and honest path when he points out the aim of his work:

This therefore being my purpose, to inquire into the original, certainty, and extent of human knowledge, together with the grounds and degrees of belief, opinion, and assent . . .¹

This sort of inquisition, he feels, is most necessary, since, before we can intelligently apply the mind to the elaboration of systems we should determine the limitations and the capacities of the instrument which is to be used. He feels that failure to do this is what accounts for so many of the exaggerations to be found in the history of human thought.

If by this inquiry into the nature of the understanding I can discover the powers thereof, how far they reach, to what things they are in any degree proportionate, and where they fail us, I suppose it may be of use to prevail with the busy mind of man to be more cautious in meddling with things exceeding its comprehension; to stop when it is at the utmost extent of its tether; and to sit down in a quiet ignorance of those things which, upon examination, are found to be beyond the reach of our capacities.²

At the other extreme from Rationalism, he teaches that all knowledge originates in sense experience, and is limited to a knowledge of ideas themselves. So, we shall here consider the object of knowledge, the objective reality of what is known, and the explanation of general ideas.

(b) *The Object of Knowledge.* That of which we are immediately aware and that which constitutes the immediate object of our knowledge is, according to Locke, an *idea* and only an idea. Thus, when it is said that we must be satisfied with what we experience, he means that we know only our ideas, whether of *sensation* (drawn from the external world) or of *reflection* (drawn from the internal operations of the mind).

¹ J. A. St. John (ed.), "An Essay Concerning Human Understanding," *The Philosophical Works of John Locke* (London: George Virtue, 1843) Introd. ii, p. 80. Most of the texts quoted can also be found according to chapter and number in Edwin A. Burt (ed.) *The English Philosophers from Bacon to Mill* (New York: Modern Library, 1939), pp. 238-402; here p. 244.

² St. John, *op. cit.*, Introd. iv, p. 80; also Burt, *op. cit.*, p. 245.

Since the mind, in all its thoughts and reasonings, hath no other immediate object but its own ideas which it alone does or can contemplate, it is evident that our knowledge is only conversant about them.

Knowledge, then, seems to me to be nothing but the perception of the connexion and agreement, or disagreement and repugnancy of any of our ideas. In this alone it consists. . . . For when we know that white is not black, what do we else but perceive that these two ideas do not agree?³

Knowledge, as has been said, lying in the perception of the agreement or disagreement of any of our ideas, it follows from hence, that,

First, We can have knowledge no further than we have ideas.

Secondly, That we have no knowledge further than we can have perception of their agreement or disagreement.⁴

So far the position is clear: Empiricism stresses experience, but experience is not immediately of objective reality; rather the object immediately experienced is the idea.

(c) *Objective Reality.* What has been said does not mean that for Locke the only things in existence are ideas; some ideas, he says, do truly represent objective reality. To indicate what he means, he distinguishes between our ideas of primary and our ideas of secondary qualities (an echo of Descartes). The ideas which we have of primary qualities (solidity, extension, figure, motion or rest, and number) do correspond to and represent reality as it is, and these qualities do exist in reality as we experience them.

However, secondary qualities (color, taste, sound, for example) do not exist as such in reality. Instead, he holds that there exist in reality some "powers" capable of causing these ideas in us, but such ideas do not correspond to or represent what actually is. Hence, these ideas are subjective.

From whence I think it easy to draw this observation, that the ideas of primary qualities of bodies are resemblances of them, and their patterns do really exist in the bodies themselves; but the ideas produced in us by these secondary qualities have no resemblance of them at all. There is nothing like our ideas existing in the bodies themselves.⁵

³ *Ibid.*, part IV, chap. i, nos. 1, 2, p. 383; *ibid.*, p. 317.

⁴ *Ibid.*, part IV, chap. iii, nos. 1, 2, p. 391; *ibid.*, p. 327.

⁵ *Ibid.*, part II, chap. viii, no. 15, p. 145; *ibid.*, p. 267.

(d) *Idea of Substance.* Locke does not deny the existence of substances, whether spiritual or material, but he equivalently says that we can have no knowledge of them as they are. In this matter he distinguishes between "real" and "nominal" essences or substances; the former referring to what they are in themselves (unknowable by us), and the latter referring to the mere grouping together of accidents or qualities or operations. Such groups are all that we can know as substances. In this explanation the Phenomenalism of Locke becomes clear, since all we can know are the mere appearances or accidents, and these in no way reveal, even in a minimal sense, anything about the principle of operation or the substance itself. In this context, then, accidents are looked on as a sort of cloak which hides rather than manifests the nature of the being, and with these accidents our knowledge terminates.

So that if anyone will examine himself concerning his notion of pure substance in general, he will find he has no other idea of it at all, but only a supposition of he knows not what support of such qualities which are capable of producing simple ideas in us; which qualities are commonly called accidents . . .

An obscure and relative idea of substance in general being thus made, we come to have the ideas of particular sorts of substances, by collecting such combinations of simple ideas as are, by experience and observation of men's senses, taken notice of to exist together, and are therefore supposed to flow from the particular internal constitution, or unknown essence of that substance.

. . . our specific ideas of substances are nothing else but a collection of a certain number of simple ideas, considered as united in one thing.⁶

. . . it is not to be wondered that we have very imperfect ideas of substances, and that the real essences, on which depend their properties and operations, are unknown to us. . . . This consideration alone is enough to put an end to all our hopes of ever having the ideas of their real essences; which whilst we want, the nominal essences we make use of instead of them, will be able to furnish us but very sparingly with any general knowledge or universal propositions capable of real certainty.⁷

(e) *Generalizations.* What has been seen concerning Locke's views on substances enters intimately into his study of general

⁶ *Ibid.*, part II, chap. xxiii, nos. 2, 3, 14, pp. 245, 250; *ibid.*, pp. 294-95, 302.

⁷ *Ibid.*, part IV, chap. vi, no. 12, pp. 421-22; *ibid.*, p. 358.

ideas. Since all that we know is what is concretely experienced here and now, and since experience really means sense experience, it is to be expected that Locke will have trouble in explaining universal ideas. He does find such trouble, and basically it is because of his insistence that we can know only "nominal" essences. Only singular things exist, and so our true ideas should be only particular ones. However, Locke sees that if that position is taken too literally, it would reduce science to a knowledge of the isolated and disconnected singulars, and thus universalization would be without foundation. Since he is not willing to go quite that far, and yet refuses to admit any abstraction which would in any way touch on the real nature of anything, he tries to find another way out.

He seeks to avoid the extremes of utter singularity and of universalization through abstraction by the devices of *separation* (the mental selection of those ideas which are shared by several beings) and *relating* (referring those ideas to several beings). Thereby, he feels that one forms ideas which are general in character without being universal in the traditional sense.

The use of words, then, being to stand as outward marks of our internal ideas, and those ideas being taken from particular things, if every particular idea that we take in should have a distinct name, names must be endless. To prevent this, the mind makes the particular ideas received from particular objects to become general; which is done by considering them as they are in the mind, such appearances, separate from all other existences, and the circumstances of real existence, as time, place, or any other concomitant ideas.⁸

For when we nicely reflect upon them, we shall find that general ideas are fictions and contrivances of the mind, that carry difficulty with them, and do not so easily offer themselves as we are apt to imagine. For example, does it not require some pains and skill to form the general idea of a triangle (which is yet none of the most abstract, comprehensive, and difficult), for it must be neither oblique nor rectangle, neither equilateral, equicrural, nor scalenon; but all and none of these at once. In effect, it is something imperfect, that cannot exist; an idea wherein some parts of several different and inconsistent ideas are put together.⁹

⁸ *Ibid.*, part II, chap. xi, no. 9, p. 161; *ibid.*, p. 281.

⁹ *Ibid.*, part IV, chap. vii, no. 9, p. 426.

His explanation is at least an admission that merely discrete, singular and isolated experiences can not provide a solid foundation for scientific work. He also admits that in some unspecified way "nature" provides the foundation for our generalizing, but this remains linked with his view that all we can know are sense qualities and that these actually constitute the only essence knowable. This very shallow foundation for universal ideas will provide a point for Hume to attack.

B. George Berkeley (1685–1753)

(f) *Empiricism Continued.* We have already examined the acosmistic position of Bishop Berkeley and seen that in his view the existence of material reality is rejected, whereas the existence of ideas and spiritual substances is admitted. Here we are concerned with him more precisely as an Empiricist, as one who extols the all-important role of experience. In this matter, he continues the position inaugurated by Locke in his insistence that the immediate object of knowledge is and can be only the idea in the mind. Moreover, in his polemic against matter, he quite agrees with Locke on the subjectivity of the secondary qualities, but goes on to say that the very same arguments also tell against the objectivity of the primary qualities; hence he propounds the subjectivity of both.

(g) *The Object of Knowledge.* It is clear that Berkeley can in no wise be called a Realist. We know immediately only our ideas, but they do not represent reality at all; in fact they themselves, and spiritual substances, are the only realities. So there is no meaning in the assertion of their correspondence with a reality apart from the knower; their truth consists in their correspondence with each other. Thus not only are ideas the immediate objects known, but they are the only reality, and so the experience which we have is only one of having a succession of ideas.

It is evident to anyone who takes a survey of the objects of human knowledge, that they are either ideas (1) actually imprinted on the senses, or else such as are (2) perceived by attending to the passions and operations of the mind, or lastly (3) ideas formed by help

of memory and imagination, either compounding, dividing, or barely representing those originally perceived in the aforesaid ways.¹⁰

Referring to Locke's distinction between primary and secondary qualities and to his views concerning their objective reality, Berkeley says:

Some there are who make a distinction betwixt *primary* and *secondary* qualities. . . . The ideas we have of these [secondary] they acknowledge not to be the resemblances of anything existing without the mind, or unperceived, but they will have our ideas of the primary qualities to be patterns or images of things which exist without the mind, in an unthinking substance which they call *matter*. By *matter*, therefore, we are to understand an inert, senseless substance, in which extension, figure, and motion do actually subsist. But it is evident from what we have already shown, that extension, figure, and motion are only ideas existing in the mind, and that an idea can be like nothing but another idea, and that consequently neither they nor their archetypes can exist in an unperceiving substance.¹¹

(h) *Generalization*. The empiricist interest in particular experiences and distrust of the universal or general is pushed one step further by Berkeley. He constantly refers to such ideas as abstract; and he insists that no such ideas can be got by abstraction, since there is no reality to provide a basis for this process. In fact, he feels that Locke conceded too much to abstraction in his explanation of the formation of general ideas. The following is his description of what this abstraction means; immediately afterwards his evaluation of it will be given.

. . . For example, the mind having observed that Peter, James, and John resemble each other in certain common agreements of shape and other qualities, leaves out of the complex or compounded idea it has of Peter, James, and any other particular man, that which is peculiar to each, retaining only what is common to all, and so makes an abstract idea wherein all the particulars equally partake; abstracting entirely from and cutting off all those circumstances and differences which might determine it to any particular existence.

¹⁰ Burt, *op. cit.*, "A Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge," no. 1, p. 523.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, no. 9, pp. 525-26.

And after this manner it is said we come by the abstract idea of man, or, if you please, humanity, or human nature . . .¹²

Whether others have this wonderful faculty of abstracting their ideas, they best can tell; for myself, I find indeed I have a faculty of imagining, or representing to myself, the ideas of those particular things I have perceived, and of variously compounding and dividing them. . . . I cannot by any effort of thought conceive the abstract idea above described.¹³

From this point on Berkeley explains our apparent possession of general or universal ideas by denying that there really are any such ideas at all; and by stating that insofar as we seem to have them, we have only some singular idea, and we make it stand for several others. Using the idea of triangle as an example, he says that all we can do is think of some one particular triangle, then we can pay no attention to the exact angles or sides which delimit this one, and thus we seem to have an idea which is a sign of and which is applicable to many.

. . . And here it is to be noted that I do not deny absolutely there are general ideas, but only that there are any *abstract* general ideas. . . . An idea which considered in itself is particular, becomes general by being made to represent or stand for all other particular ideas of the same sort.¹⁴

. . . Thus when I demonstrate any proposition concerning triangles, it is to be supposed that I have in view the universal idea of a triangle; which ought not to be understood as if I could frame an idea of a triangle which was neither equilateral, nor scalenon, nor equicrural; but only that the particular triangle I consider, whether of this or that sort it matters not, doth equally stand for and represent all rectilinear triangles whatsoever, and is in that sense *universal*.¹⁵

C. David Hume (1711–1776)

(i) *And Empiricism.* Since Hume continues the tradition we have been considering and brings it to its logical fruition, we shall

¹² *Ibid.*, Introd., no. 10, p. 513.

¹³ *Ibid.*, Introd., no. 10, p. 513.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, Introd., no. 12, p. 515.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, Introd., no. 15, p. 517.

indicate only in the briefest fashion how the same themes are handled by him. His views on knowledge as meaning nothing more than a succession of disconnected or "loose" impressions or ideas connected only by the associative power of the imagination, his insistence on the unknowability of causality and of substances, and his consequent limitation of experience to what is immediately sensed—these and other points in his doctrine have led writers to call him variously a Sceptic, an Agnostic, a Phenomenalist, and a Naturalist as well as an Empiricist. It was Hume's theory of knowledge which more than anything else alerted Kant to the necessity of re-examining human knowledge and finding the foundations for scientific studies.

(j) *The Object of Knowledge.* In line with his immediate predecessors, Hume seems to assume it as most evident that what we immediately know can be only our *perceptions*. By these he means roughly what had been meant by ideas, but Hume restricts the use of the term *ideas* to those perceptions which are somewhat vague or dim, and gives the name *impressions* to those perceptions which are vivid and clear. In respect to the existence of and conformity of perceptions to outside things, Hume is not exactly clear. At times he seems to deny their existence; at other times he prefers to say only that we can not know them, but are led to believe that they exist, and very often a sort of common sense Realism breaks forth in his way of talking and indicates that he looks on knowledge as conformity to objective reality. The following quotations give some indication of these attitudes.

We may observe, that 'tis universally allow'd by philosophers, and is besides pretty obvious of itself, that nothing is ever really present with the mind but its perceptions or impressions and ideas, and that external objects become known to us only by those perceptions they occasion.¹⁶

For as to the notion of external existence, when taken for something specifically different from our perceptions, we have already shewn its absurdity.¹⁷

(k) *Generalizations.* Since experience can mean only my perception in the immediate present of this or that particular event,

¹⁶ L. A. Selby-Bigge (ed.), David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1888, reprinted 1958), Bk. I, Part II, Sect. VI, p. 67.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, Bk. I, Part IV, Sect. II, p. 188.

knowledge becomes only the perception of disparate, unconnected and individual perceptions with no objective bond between them. That I seem to grasp them as connected, is only the function of the imagination, which in various ways tries to associate various perceptions together.

'Tis still true, that every distinct perception, which enters into the composition of the mind, is a distinct existence, and is different, and distinguishable, and separable from every other perception, either contemporary or successive. . . . The understanding never observes any real connexion among objects, and . . . even the union of cause and effect, when strictly examin'd, resolves itself into a customary association of ideas.¹⁸

This position has been referred to as the "loosening" of ideas, in the sense that each is complete in itself and not really connected with another; there is mere succession. In this context it is easy to see that there can be no generalization based upon an objectively grasped similarity of natures, but only particular ideas. Since, however, there do seem to be universal ideas, Hume explains them as particular ideas joined to some common term.

A particular idea becomes general by being annex'd to a general term; that is, to a term, which from a customary conjunction has a relation to many other particular ideas, and readily recalls them in the imagination.¹⁹

Let men be once fully perswaded of these two principles, *That there is nothing in any object, consider'd in itself, which can afford us a reason for drawing a conclusion beyond it; and, That even after the observation of the frequent or constant conjunction of objects, we have no reason to draw any inference concerning any object beyond those of which we have had experience.*²⁰

The two principles just quoted are symptomatic of the empirical mentality in that they are a warning against "going beyond" what is immediately experienced by the senses. It is in the light of these principles that any attempt to acquire knowledge of substances, of spiritual principles, and of causality, is doomed to failure, since these cannot be "experienced."

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, Sect. VI, pp. 259-60.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, Part I, Sect. VII, p. 23.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, Part III, Sect. XII, p. 139.

III • THE ANALYSIS

(a) *Reaffirmation of Experience.* Seen against the background of Rationalism and of the Cambridge Platonists, this empirical reaffirmation of the need for experience, together with the uncompromising rejection of Innatism and the attack upon the excess of *a priori* system-building, introduced a much needed corrective into the field of modern philosophy. Once again the humble origins of man's knowledge as well as the fact that it is only by slow and laborious efforts that he progresses in his acquisition of truth were affirmed. His most developed systems, his most grandiose conceptions, even the most basic principles of his knowledge, all must somehow be discovered by him through a gradual analysis of the reality which he experiences. When the classical Empiricists wrote, these things badly needed saying.

Moreover, the Empiricist's insistence that only individuals exist was a point well made, although such insistence may appear to many today to be unnecessary. And in connection with it went the recognition of the fact that in the conception of the universal concept the intellect has a very definite and active role to play.

(b) *The Object of Knowledge.* However, reflection on the value of Empiricism cannot stop there, since the Empiricists in their laudable stress on the role of experience cannot be said to have arrived at a fully satisfactory view of knowledge, and the logical implications of the position can be seen by following the movement from Locke through Hume.

The basic assumption of Empiricism in respect to the object of knowledge is that the only thing immediately knowable is an idea, so we never have immediate contact with what is. We can examine this first in Locke's Representative Realism. His doctrine is called a *Realism* because he admits the extramental reality of sensible things, and it is called *Representative* because he admits that at least our ideas of primary qualities do actually represent what is in reality. In this sense his views on cognition constitute a copy or representative theory of knowledge. For Locke, then, ideas are a strictly instrumental means in knowing; they are the immediate objects grasped, and only mediately do we sometimes come to know some sensible qualities.

This position is, however, logically inconsistent. For one thing, if we have no immediate contact with what is, by what right can we ever say that any idea truly corresponds to what is as it is? The very possibility of such an assertion would presuppose that a comparison be made between the idea and the reality of which an idea is had; and to make such a comparison it would be necessary to have (1) the idea, and (2) some direct contact with the other term of the comparison, that is, with the reality in question. Without this, I can never say that my idea is an exact representation of what is.

Likewise, it is in keeping with what has just been said that the word "postulate" can be accurately used in respect to Locke's position. If all that I immediately know is the idea itself, then that is all that I ever will know immediately, and beyond that I can have faith in the reliability of my knowledge, I can hope that it knows what is; in a word, I can *postulate* that my knowledge accurately represents what is, but in the context I can never know that this is the case, because there is no way of ever making the required comparison.

(c) *Reification of Ideas.* The empirical position, then, actually means the reification of ideas. That is to say, it does not recognize that ideas are a unique sort of means whereby man knows what is, or that their sole function is to link the knower and the known; rather it makes of them the object of knowledge, by describing them as means which are themselves the things known. This is to make ideas into things known, or to reify ideas.

This admission gives rise to a further reflection which the logic of the situation seems to demand. If ideas are raised to the status of things known and if all that we can grasp are ideas, then it must logically be admitted that we cannot immediately know even our ideas. Between the object known (the *idea* itself) and our knowledge of it there would have to intervene an idea of that idea; moreover, that same process would have to be repeated indefinitely. Although this may sound a bit extreme as stated, still it is logically unavoidable, if Representative Realism is taken seriously. For what logically coherent reason can be adduced for stopping with the immediate knowledge of an idea when the initial position taken is that what is known can be known only mediately through knowledge of an idea of it?

Finally, the idealistic implications of this position have been abundantly illustrated by Berkeley's development. Once the mind is affirmed to know only its ideas, it is logically simple to question whether there *is* anything more, and to reach the point of denying that there is any extramental reality. As Berkeley said, the same reasons for denying objectivity to secondary qualities can be brought to bear on primary qualities, and thereby on all material existents. When that point is reached, one is no longer explaining the entirety of the elements experienced by the human person in knowing, but is suppressing some of the relevant data.

Hume's Scepticism and Agnosticism in regard to all substances and to the reality of causality is another indication of the logical results of Mediate Realism as a theory of knowledge.

(d) *Knowledge of Substance.* Although the explanation of substance and accident will be more carefully provided in the study of general metaphysics, we can point out here that the empirical view as to their relation is unsatisfactory. The Phenomenalism characteristic of Empiricism sees in "accidents" and operations a sort of cloak or shell which surrounds the underlying substance and which blocks it from view. This is a very naive interpretation, or misinterpretation. It fails to see that accidents are modifications of and manifestations of substance itself, that as such they reveal something and tell us about reality itself, since it is the substantial reality which is thus accidentally modified. The operations do proceed from and thus do tell us something about the very nature which is operating. This may often be a minimal knowledge, but it is something positive, and could not be had if accidents were somehow little "beings" which cloaked what is from our view. Thus the choice offered by Empiricism between an intuitive grasp of essences, which they reject, and a complete ignorance of natures is not one which we need make.

(e) *Generalization.* Empiricism weakly admits that some sort of universalization is required for scientific knowledge. Locke even goes so far as to say that the reason we can generalize is somehow connected with similarities between things. Verbally, at least, this appears to be an admission of the foundation for abstraction. However, his basic Phenomenalism prevents him from going deep enough, and so he could not actually provide a solid foundation for scientific knowledge. If all we can really know are

singular things as such, then generalization loses all effective meaning, and human knowledge must be content with isolated contacts with reality.

This same attitude prevents Berkeley from finding a solution in the case he presents of the triangle. On the level of his discussion he is perfectly right in saying that we cannot arrive at knowledge of a triangle which is not one determined kind. What he means is that we cannot have a sense image of triangle as such. He is right, but he is not right in denying the possibility of an intellectual conception of triangle.

Finally, Hume's use of association in this matter cannot provide more than a contingent and passing connection, and it results in a purely mental construct, with no solid foundation in reality. This too cannot be a sufficient basis for scientific knowledge. It was considerations of this sort which aroused Kant to a reconsideration of this whole position and of the grounds for the possibility of science.

(f) *Being Empirical.* To sum this all up briefly, the chief difficulty with Empiricism is that it is not sufficiently empirical. The position that all we can know are sense presentations and that experience is limited in meaning to sense experience is an oversimplification of the data. It is understandable in the light of historic reasons, but it cannot hope to provide an adequate explanation of human knowledge. There is more to our knowledge than meets the eye or any other sense, precisely because the senses are not the only faculties we have for knowing. Experience is indeed the sole appeal we have, but the experience of the Empiricists is not the totality of human experience; it is but part of it. Our experience is both sensible and intellectual, and these two are not identical, despite the intimate connection which exists between them. So in what I sensibly experience my intellect is capable of grasping what is only intellectually perceptible, and that is not limited to the mere singular, isolated, and disparate, but can touch on the foundation of unity, universality, and necessity.

IV • SUMMARY OF THE ANALYSIS

(a) The rejection of Innatism and of *a priori* systems together with renewed stress on the importance of experience as a source of

knowledge are strong points in the empirical philosophies. Cf. *Analysis (a)*.

(b) However, in making ideas the immediate object of human knowledge, the Empiricists have rendered it logically impossible to know whether there is conformity to reality. Knowing immediately only the idea itself, I can make no comparison to determine its reliability as representative. Cf. *Analysis (b)*.

(c) Their position raises ideas to the status of "things" known. This involves the further inconvenience that as "things" known, ideas themselves must be only mediately known, and so knowledge becomes either logically impossible or else an act of faith. Cf. *Analysis (c)*.

(d) Idealism, Scepticism, or Agnosticism are the natural fruits of this theory of knowledge. Cf. *Analysis (c)*.

(e) Although rejecting an intuitive view of essences, Empiricism also sees accidents and operations as hiding rather than revealing the substance or nature of the thing. Cf. *Analysis (d)*.

(f) The limitation of experience to mean singular sense experiences results in the inability of Empiricism to provide a solid foundation for universal ideas or for scientific knowledge. Mere phenomenal similarity or the imaginative association of ideas is not profound enough to uphold any necessity or universality. Cf. *Analysis (e)*.

(g) In the sense that the Empiricists limit altogether too stringently the meaning of human experience, we can say that their basic difficulty is a failure to be sufficiently empirical. All the elements of human experience must be accepted and explained, without arbitrary limitations being imposed. Cf. *Analysis (f)*.

V • THE STATEMENT IN BRIEF

Empiricism introduces a much needed emphasis on the role of experience; however, its views that only ideas can be immediate objects of knowledge, that even a minimal knowledge of substances is impossible, and that universal ideas are not founded on the natures of things, result in a theory of knowledge which is inadequate.

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Note on Nominalism and Conceptualism

I • THE SITUATION

(a) *Why This Note.* It may seem strange that at this point a note should be introduced touching on what appears to be an obsolete medieval question. However, for one thing it was lively discussion of the question of universals by the various medieval schools which helped develop the solution proposed in the first part of this work, and so it has both doctrinal and historical interest here. For another thing, it will be easily seen that between these schools and the Empiricism we have just considered there is a kindred spirit.

Moreover, in speaking of contemporary philosophy the term "Nominalism" is frequently used, and so some indication of its meaning will be useful. It involves a mentality which does appeal to "practical" minds, who are more interested in "facts" and in what works than in general theorizing.

The perpetuity of interest in this medieval question is indicated by this reference to the legal profession:

It may seem a bold and reckless statement to assert that an adequate discussion of cases [in a court of law] involves the whole mediaeval controversy over the reality of universals. And yet, the confident assertion of immutable principles of justice inhering in the very idea of free government made by the writers of these decisions,

and the equally confident assertion of their critics that there are no such principles, show how impossible it is to keep out of metaphysics.¹

(b) *Exaggerated Realism.* Boethius (480–524) adumbrated a general theory of Moderate Realism; but in the discussion which then began the first stage was dominated by exaggerated Realism. According to this position there is such a complete and precise correspondence between our concepts and reality that when one has an idea, generic or specific, there exists some substantial reality exactly corresponding to it. Thus, when I have the idea “man” and apply it to Peter and James and John, there must exist a unitary substance corresponding to my idea, and the individuals just share in or participate in it; or it can be said that they are just accidental modifications of that one substance.

Hence, between the way I know and the way things are, there is complete correspondence, which would mean, for example, that two men would be substantially one and only accidentally different, and that when a new man is born all that happens is this: A new property is acquired by an already existing substance. This theory was held by William of Champeaux (1070–1120), although he later abandoned it owing to the sustained attack of Abelard.

CRITIQUE: We mention this doctrine only in passing, so by way of critique we need only say that it is an extremely naive position, and one which destroys individuality. It is naive because it supposes a complete correspondence between the way I know and the way things are, and it destroys individuality because if logically pursued, it would result in complete Monism.

II • DESCRIPTION

A. *Nominalism*

(a) *Basic Insight.* The central tenet of Nominalism is that all that exists is the singular, individuated, isolated thing; hence all that we can really know and all about which we can form concepts are these individuals; hence no universal exists in reality, and no

¹ Morris R. Cohen, “The Place of Logic in the Law,” *Harvard Law Review*, XXIX (1916), 628.

universal ideas exist in the mind. We do, of course, use one word (*nomen*) to designate several things, but this is only a sort of shorthand in terminology and has no counterpart either in the mind or in reality.

(b) *Many Applications.* It should not be thought that Nominalism was narrowly limited to the question of universals. Actually, as a movement it was vitally concerned with metaphysical questions such as the proofs for the existence of God, the nature of substance and accident, the nature of causality, the relation of philosophy to theology. And it was the Agnosticism implied in their position when applied in these spheres which gave rise to the violent opposition they met once they stepped outside the field of logic. It is also true that they did enjoy a very wide popularity in the universities of Europe from the end of the fourteenth until well into the sixteenth century.

(c) *Logical and Real Function.* Here we are most interested in the nominalistic attitude on universals, and on that matter it is true to say that it taught that universality pertains only to the logical function of terms (to their use in a proposition), and does not pertain at all to their real function (to their use as standing for things). This actually means that there is ultimately no real foundation in things for the universal, since there are simply and solely individual things in reality. It should, of course, be remembered that those who held this doctrine were in an intellectual environment where it was most important to counter the tenets of exaggerated Realism. Apart from that, one valuable result of their work was their development of studies in logic, but even that eventually degenerated into "logic-chopping."

William of Ockham is frequently associated with this movement; however, he can be interpreted as having taught a form of Moderate Realism, but without the metaphysical background of exemplary ideas in God. Still, he did in great part inspire the "Ockhamist Movement" which was quite openly nominalistic in our present sense of the word.²

² Cf. Copleston, *op. cit.*, III, pp. 122-27.

B. Conceptualism

(d) *The Doctrine.* As a pure position Conceptualism teaches that there are not only universal words but also universal ideas, but that these lack objective reference, and so have no foundation in reality. This position, also, is a reaction against exaggerated Realism.

Although as pure positions Nominalism and Conceptualism are easily distinguished, in practice it is very difficult to classify individual medieval philosophers in respect to these positions. In each case there are certain necessary qualifications which make a too definitive classification a bit unjustified. Actually most medieval Nominalists are called such simply because they make no explicit mention of the role of the universal concept, and were they so questioned it might be that they would admit such a concept. Of course the same cannot exactly be said of more recent Empiricists or their followers. For these thinkers, the concept is only a sort of vague or undifferentiated grasp of a singular "image."

Still, among the medievals, it can be said that Peter Aureoleus and Henry of Harclay (fourteenth century) did have conceptualistic tendencies, in that they looked upon the universal as being formed by a sort of impression of the individual.³

This spirit is much more evident in a philosophy such as Kant's, where universality is definitely and solely due to the imposition of the categories of the mind.

III • THE ANALYSIS

(a) *Singular Individuals.* The basic fact recognized by both of these positions is, as in Empiricism, that things as they exist in reality are individual and singular. This had to be emphasized against an exaggerated Realism which insisted that *genera* and *species* are found in the extramental order in exactly the same way as they are found in the mind. In addition to this, Conceptualism recognized that universals as such have formal existence only in the mind, and thus in some sense at least they show the dynamic

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 40-42.

and active power of the mind, rather than its mere passivity in knowing.

(b) *On Nominalism.* If this position were to be taken seriously as it is proposed, it would mean the end of significant human speech and of all scientific knowledge. This sounds like an extreme statement to make. However, if speech is a material function whose purpose is to communicate knowledge and manifest what we know, then it must represent what is in the mind. Hence words cannot have a meaning which is nonexistent in the mind, and if there are different types of words, they must represent different types of ideas. As we saw in Part One, Chapter Seven, we use universal words which are applied univocally and distributively to many individuals. Hence universal ideas must exist in the mind.

(c) *On Conceptualism.* Here again we find one element of knowledge exaggerated. If universal ideas are conceived to be mere mental fabrications or purely subjective forms imposed on reality, then the objectivity of knowledge can hardly be defended with any logical consistency. What must be kept in mind is that although the formal extramental existence of universals as such cannot be granted, it must be admitted that there is and there is seen to be a foundation in reality for the intellectual generalization which takes place. Things are objectively similar in varying degrees, and it is this recognized similarity which provides the objective justification for the mind's way of conceiving a nature. We must beware of the naive position which demands for objectivity that what is known exist in reality in the same way as it exists in the mind. What is known does exist in reality and it also exists in the mind; however, the way it exists differs in both cases, even though there is a foundation in reality for the mind conceiving the nature as it actually does.

IV • SUMMARY OF THE ANALYSIS

(a) Stress on the singularity of things was needed in the face of exaggerated Realism. Cf. *Analysis* (a).

(b) Nominalism would mean a lack of significance for universal terms, and so for scientific knowledge. However, various types of words indicate various types of ideas in the mind, and so universal words manifest universal ideas. Cf. *Analysis* (b).

(c) Conceptualism is inconsistent with the truth and objectivity of knowledge. Although the universal does not formally exist in things, it is founded on the objective similarities found in reality. Cf. *Analysis* (c).

V • THE STATEMENT IN BRIEF

Nominalism cannot justify verbal predication; Conceptualism cannot justify the objectivity of judgments; and both positions exaggerate the singularity of things.

VI • DEFINITIONS

Nominalism: a doctrine which teaches that only words are universal, that there are no universal concepts, and that reality is utterly singular.

Conceptualism: a doctrine which teaches that both words and concepts can be universal, but that reality is utterly singular.

Verbal Predication: the use of some one term to designate many things.

Objectivity of Judgments: the correspondence to reality of affirmations or negations made by the mind.

To Exaggerate Singularity: to find not even the foundation for universality in things, but to see them all as isolated and disconnected facts.

VII • SUGGESTED READINGS

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THE KANTIAN CRITIQUE

I • THE SITUATION

One of the most prominent and certainly one of the most impressive studies of human knowledge in the history of philosophy is Kantian Criticism. Most modern philosophers have been at least indirectly influenced by Kant's attempt to reconcile Rationalism and Empiricism, and to find and explain the conditions necessary for scientific knowledge. His is a vast system which cannot be mastered without long and diligent study, and hence it cannot be expected that this brief consideration will do more than touch some of the main points of his theory of knowledge, omitting its application to other branches of philosophy. Moreover, since Kant's explanations are quite extensive, it will be impractical to give quotations; so the student is urged to turn directly to the *Critique of Pure Reason* or else to some history of modern philosophy for corroboration or more detailed explanations of the description given below.

II • THE DESCRIPTION

(a) *The Background.* Historically preceding Emmanuel Kant, and profoundly influencing his thought, were the Rationalists (Leibnitz, Spinoza, Wolff) and the Empiricists (Locke, Berkeley, and especially Hume). In general it can be said that the Rationalists exaggerated the power of the human intellect and insisted on its ability for *a priori* knowledge and grandiose conceptual systems, whereas the Empiricists so exaggerated the role of individual and isolated experiences that their doctrine provided no

logical foundation for general or universal knowledge of any sort, with the result that scientific knowledge and the communication of any general truths becomes logically impossible.

Kant sought to eliminate the exaggerations and to reconcile the two positions and thus to explain *how* scientific knowledge is possible.

(b) *Types of Judgment.* In doing so he began by proposing certain definitions which were to influence his own explanations and which are necessary for us in order to understand him:

Analytical Judgments are those in which the predicate is already known in knowing the subject. These he considers to be merely tautological; hence they do not contribute to the advance of knowledge.

Synthetic Judgments are those in which the predicate is not contained in the subject. These do increase our knowledge.

Empirical Judgments have to do with the particular facts of sense experience.

A Priori Judgments express factors independent of sense experience.

Kant accepted scientific knowledge in the fields of mathematics and the physical sciences as an indisputable fact and sought only to explain *how* it was possible. So, since such knowledge actually contains the characteristics of necessity and universality, and since experienced facts are totally particular, isolated, and contingent, as the Empiricists had said, Kant concluded that there must be an *a priori* element in all scientific knowledge. Hence scientific judgments are at once *synthetic* (they increase our knowledge) and *a priori* (being necessary and universal).

(c) *A Priori Categories.* Just *how* precisely is this possible? Kant's reply is that such judgments both rest on experience, in the sense that the *matter* for knowledge must be derived from sense experience, and also include an *a priori* element which is contributed by the mind of the subject knowing, because universality and necessity are not found in the sensible reality. This is to say that what is got from sense experience is a chaotic, disorganized, disunited, unformed matter, and that must be unified, formed or shaped, and organized by the knowing mind. Hence of its nature the mind has a tendency to unify sense presentations. Moreover, this is not just a general, undifferentiated tendency to unity

in general, for it must be admitted that the mind regularly produces various sorts of unities, and hence must be endowed naturally with various different principles or categories according to which it produces the various unifications of sense presentations. These are the famous Kantian *a priori* categories of the understanding, for example, cause-effect, substance-accident, possibility-impossibility, necessity-contingency.

(d) *Noumenon and Phenomenon*. All this means that according to Kant, when I say that I know something, the object which I actually know is not the thing as it is in itself, but rather the object known is the combination of a "matter" coming from outside and a "form" which is imposed on it by my understanding. He calls the thing-in-itself a *noumenon*, and what is actually known, a *phenomenon*. Hence we never know *what is* but only *what appears*, and what appears is at least partially a projection or creation of my understanding. True reality is forever inaccessible to the human understanding.

(e) *The Imagination*. The question naturally arises as to why some one definite category rather than any one at random comes into action for this or that particular sense presentation, or why particular sense presentations are subsumed under some definite category. What determines the selections involved? To answer this Kant postulates what he calls the "schemata of the imagination," the function of which is to organize the sense presentations for a definite category, and to adapt the categories to the sense presentations in question.

(f) *Kantian Elements of Knowledge*. We can summarize the preceding by pointing out briefly the elements of human scientific knowledge as Kant proposes them:

- (1) The *matter*, which is a chaotic, disorganized something coming from the unknowable thing-in-itself, or noumenon.
- (2) Sense *forms* of space and time which inform the matter on the sense level. These are mentioned here just for purposes of completion.
- (3) The *schemata* of the imagination which organize the sense presentations and prepare the categories.
- (4) The *categories* of the understanding which bring about various unities and thus constitute or create what is actually known.

As can be seen, only the first element has any objectivity, the other three being imposed by the knower. All four together make up the object known, the phenomenon, the noumenon remaining totally unknown in itself.

III • THE ANALYSIS

(a) *Passivity, Activity, and Knowledge.* It should be easily seen that what Kant sought to accomplish in his own intellectual environment was something badly needed and valuable. The exaggerations of Rationalism and Empiricism had to be countered, whereas what was valid in their insights had to be preserved. Thus we can appreciate Kant's insistence on the importance of experience, since no true philosophy can afford to shut itself up in the empyrean towers of pure isolated thought to concoct its theories apart from the realities in which we live and move. If knowledge is relational, then it must be knowledge of *something*, and so man's experiences of being are of prime importance. However, it is also true that in knowing, man is not purely passive or receptive; the intellect does have its active and vital role to play, and here Kant is also right in seeking to grasp and express the dynamic aspects of the mind in its operations. He is right, too, in finding a clue to or an indication of this dynamism closely allied to the universality and necessity characteristic of scientific knowledge. Sensible things are surely individual and contingent, whereas science is of the universal and the necessary—at least as an ideal.

(b) *The Unknown Noumenon.* Although that is true, the question remains as to whether Kant was entirely successful in his ambitious project. It is one thing to detect and reject the exaggerations of other positions; it is another to offer a positive doctrine which is itself free of exaggerations.

One of the first things which strike us in considering Kant's theory of knowledge is that he admits the existence of extramental reality, of the thing-in-itself, the noumenon, and at the same time he says that it is entirely unknowable by man. In one who sought to deliver knowledge from the Scepticism of Hume this is difficult to understand, since it is really equivalent to a total Agnosticism. It means that we simply do not know reality, and our experience of knowledge as relational loses all meaning. Such an explanation

of human knowledge is in fact not an explanation of what we concretely experience, but rather a denial of some of the relevant data. The knowledge act is experienced as relational, that is the fact to be explained; to deny access to or to suppress the term of that relation is not to explain what is experienced, but to explain what knowledge might be were it not relational. Since by knowledge we do not know the other as it is, we might just as well say that by knowledge we do not know.

(c) *Phenomena and Objectivity.* In regard also to what is actually said to be the object known, the phenomenon, it must be said that since this is constituted by the categories of the understanding, it exists only when it is thought. In this sense it is a creation or projection of the mind, and hence also there is no meaningful objectivity to knowledge.

(d) *An Idealistic Doctrine.* Moreover, in this context *truth* would seem to be deprived of all meaning, or at best it would be equivalent to what truth means in a relativistic and an idealistic theory of knowledge. If noumena are unknowable, it is *as if* they did not exist at all, and so far as knowledge is concerned they might just as well not exist. In fact since we can know nothing about them, we cannot logically admit that they really do exist; their existence is at least irrelevant and maybe even deniable. Thus we are faced with a theory which is idealistic, and hence subject to the criticisms previously given.

(e) *Failure of the Schemata.* Kant himself saw a real difficulty in the question of how the various categories and the various groups of sense presentations ever become coordinated. He sought to answer it by means of the schemata of the imagination. However, this is not a very effective answer, since it merely puts the same difficulty in a different location, and the question still remains as to how and why the schemata function as they do. If it is in purely arbitrary fashion, knowledge itself becomes arbitrary. If it is ultimately due to some psychological association, after the fashion of Hume, then at the very center of scientific knowledge there is found a merely contingent and temporal factor (the imagination and its associations being outside and inferior to the understanding) and hence the universality and necessity of knowledge is lost. Finally, if the cognoscitive faculties work as they do because of

some structure objectively true of reality and according to which the mind knows and reacts, then the fundamental position of Kantianism has been abandoned, and some grasp of the thing in itself and in its structure has been admitted. Kant cannot consistently admit this last alternative, and so in all rigor, he should admit that even the necessary and universal elements, which he sought so hard to justify, cannot be justified in his system.

(f) *An Oversimplification.* Finally, there is an oversimplification in the view that because sense realities are particular and contingent, there is no foundation at all in reality for the characteristics of universality and necessity. Any such conclusion is based on the empiricist assertion of the "loosening of ideas" (Hume), according to which each thing is totally different from all others, and there is no relation between any two ideas. However, in our experience we do find countless similarities between things, and it is on the basis of those similarities that the mind forms its universal ideas. In other words, certain structures are not limited to any one individual, but are repeated or are capable of being repeated again and again. We are capable of grasping this common element, and although it exists in each case individualized, it can nonetheless be known as common to many. Hence there is a foundation in the very individuals themselves for the universal.

Moreover there is some foundation for necessity for the twofold reason: (1) that while a thing is what it is, it cannot simultaneously be otherwise, and in that minimal sense it now is necessarily what it is, and (2) that we can gradually come to know something about the natures of things; this tells us what anything having that nature necessarily is.

IV • SUMMARY OF THE ANALYSIS

(a) Kant sought to avoid the exaggerations of both Rationalism and Empiricism, and to stress the need of experience as well as the active, dynamic aspects of human knowledge. Cf. *Analysis (a)*.

(b) Still, since the noumenon remains totally unknowable, the experience of knowledge as relational is not explained, and the theory itself becomes equivalently a total Agnosticism. Cf. *Analysis (b)*.

(c) The phenomena exist only when they are thought, and so are mere creations of the mind; hence there is no objectivity to knowledge. Cf. *Analysis* (c).

(d) Truth itself in this context is relativistic and idealistic; truth is totally dependent on the subject knowing, since it is just *as if* things did not exist at all. Cf. *Analysis* (d).

(e) Since the schemata of the imagination are given a determining role in knowledge, and since these are temporal and contingent, neither universality nor necessity are really justified by Kant. Cf. *Analysis* (e).

(f) The denial of a foundation for universality and necessity in reality is really an oversimplification. True, things are individual and singular; but they are also objectively similar, and their similarities can be known and recognized as the foundation sought. Cf. *Analysis* (f).

V • THE STATEMENT IN BRIEF

Kant's theory of knowledge is not an adequate explanation of knowledge in respect to the object known, the nature of truth itself, or the necessity and universality which it seeks to justify.

VI • DEFINITIONS

Kant's Theory of Knowledge: a doctrine which teaches that *what is known* is merely the phenomenon, and that it results from the imposition of the categories of the understanding on some "matter" which comes from an unknowable noumenon.

Not Adequate: not taking all the factors of the act of knowledge into consideration.

Object Known: what is known, as has been seen, cannot be totally dependent on the creation of the knower.

Truth: absolute and concerned with real being.

Necessary: that which must be what it is.

Universal: that which is or is conceived to be common to many.

VII • SUGGESTED READINGS

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EXISTENTIALISM

I • THE SITUATION

Like most classifications used to designate several different individuals in the history of human thought, the term "Existentialism" is one which covers a tremendous variety of views, many of them in violent conflict with one another. It is important, however, that we take a look at this very recent emphasis in philosophy, keeping an eye out particularly for those elements which have to do with human knowledge.

It is quite generally conceded that the Father of Modern Existentialism is Søren Kierkegaard (1813–1855) the Danish thinker. Two who have in recent decades attracted attention are Jean-Paul Sartre, who is an avowed Atheist, and Gabriel Marcel, an avowed Catholic. Under the same heading are generally included a host of others, among whom we can mention Albert Camus, Martin Heidegger, Karl Jaspers, Simone de Beauvoir, Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Nicolas Berdyaev.

II • THE DESCRIPTION

(a) *Background.* The wide disparity of doctrines presented by these writers makes it extremely difficult to present even a generally accurate summary of their positions. However, the following somewhat negative statement can be made as an initial step towards understanding them: Existentialists embody a strong reaction against the apparent meaninglessness of man on the modern scene—and that meaninglessness is generally ascribed by them to the influence of philosophical Idealism and of the scientific or technocratic

interests of the era in which we live. This can stand a bit of clarification.

(b) *Systems*. Philosophically, these writers feel, the modern era has been dominated by Idealism and particularly by rationalistic exaggerations. Men sought to erect grandiose systems of thought, of pure thought, and to fit reality into their schemes. In this way the all-important place was accorded to the logical generalized system as such, and there seemed to be a rather total disrespect for and disregard of the individual as such, particularly of the human person. The person became just another fact which might prove embarrassing for the system, or at best was looked on as just another moment in the progress of pure thought. In the realm of speculation this might be looked upon as a tyranny of the universal or of the system. One of the outstanding examples of this mentality is found by Existentialists in the philosophy of Georg W. Hegel, who sees in reality only the unfolding of absolute thought thinking itself; man, like all other "things" is just a moment in the self-realization of the absolute mind. In this sort of context, man's existence seems to be reduced to a significance very nearly approximating zero.

(c) *Technocracy*. On the other hand, technological advances in this machine age have tended to unseat man from any position of dignity in the world. He is made to serve the machine, instead of having the machine serve him. At least this is how the Existentialists would have us look at the matter. Man has been degraded; he has become a mere cog in a grand machine; he is subordinated to technocratic advances; where he can be replaced by a more efficient machine he is eliminated, and the elimination does not in practice imply his enhancement. Each one can reflect for himself on how much validity is to be accorded such indictments.

In order to present a slightly more detailed analysis of these views we shall examine a few of the individuals in this "movement," limiting ourselves to Søren Kierkegaard, Jean-Paul Sartre and Gabriel Marcel.

A. Søren Kierkegaard

(d) *Hegelianism and Kierkegaard*. There are two outstanding factors contributing to the position at which Kierkegaard finally

arrived: (1) the philosophy of Hegel, and (2) Kierkegaard's understanding of the message and meaning of Christianity.

All that has been so summarily said about Idealism above can be applied here to Kierkegaard's understanding of Hegel. He began with unfeigned admiration for the grandiose scheme and plans of Hegel; he sought answers to the meaning of life and of man in Hegel; he waited patiently for answers to his queries. Finally, he became convinced that none were forthcoming and that none would ever be provided by any such philosophy. The principal reason, he felt, was that Hegelianism omitted the one thing that was important: existence.¹ Hence he caricatured the Hegelian system by comparing it to an enormous castle in which no one can live:

In relation to their systems most systematisers are like a man who builds an enormous castle and lives in a shack close by; they do not live in their own enormous systematic buildings.²

Moreover, he says that the youth went to Hegel for guidance and for answers to problems, only to be deceived by him. In short, Kierkegaard sees in Hegelianism only the depersonalization of the human being.

(e) *Christianity and Kierkegaard.* On the other hand, Kierkegaard came to see in Christianity the expression of a diametrically opposite view of man—of the supreme value of the individual person, and of each one's personal dialogue with a personal God. This meant the irreplaceable dignity and the immeasurable importance of each human person. One should not become lost in the crowd or be overwhelmed by the importance of numbers. In fact,

a crowd in its very concept is the untruth, by reason of the fact that it renders the individual completely impenitent and irresponsible . . .³

¹ Cf. David Swenson (trans.), S. Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1941), pp. 99–113.

² Dru, Alexander (ed. and trans.), *The Journals of Søren Kierkegaard* (London: Oxford University Press, 1938), entry no. 583. p. 156.

³ Walter Lowrie (trans.), S. Kierkegaard, *The Point of View* (London: Oxford University Press, 1939), p. 114. Cf. the entire section treating of "The Individual," pp. 111–138.

For Kierkegaard each one is an isolated and singular individual; he must do all he can to develop his God-relationship, and thus become more truly human.

(f) *Other Themes.* Kierkegaard distinguishes three "stages" or levels of existence on which men live, and these he calls the aesthetic, the ethical and the religious. He means to say that some devote their lives to the pursuit of pleasure (sensual or intellectual), others are dominated by a sense of duty, and finally the few try to realize the "freedom of the sons of God."⁴ It is to the realization of this total personal freedom, unhampered by authority as such or by doctrine as such, that Kierkegaard invites all, if they are to live the truly Christian life. His analyses of the various types of human living are profound psychological studies and manifest both a penetrating knowledge of what motivates people and a masterful power of expression on his part.

SUMMARY: In general we can say that in Kierkegaard there is a violent and even extreme reaction to speculative thought and to systems in general, since he identified all philosophical system-building with Hegelianism. There is an extreme reaction to doctrinal aspects of Christianity, to authority or intermediaries between God and the individual, to any sort of mob or crowd thinking, and to any sort of generalizing or interest in essences. On the other hand, there is insistence on total human freedom for the development of the personality, although this, he feels, can never be realized except by total dedication to Christ; on the supreme value of the individual as distinguished from the "crowd" or the "race"; on the identity between truth and "subjectivity"; and on the importance of "existence."

B. Jean-Paul Sartre

(g) *Man and Atheism.* In Sartre's thinking, too, the central place is held by the human person and all else is interpreted in

⁴ This theme is found repeatedly in Kierkegaard's works, but especially in these two translated by Walter Lowrie: *Either/Or* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1946) and *Stages on Life's Way* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1945).

the light of man. However, the climate is very different from that of Kierkegaard's thought, since Sartre's Atheism is avowedly at the root of his interpretations and of his analyses, so much so that it even determines his selection of the data to be considered. He postulates Atheism as basic to his own personal thinking, although he says that the whole question doesn't merit much attention, since even if there is a God it makes no practical difference at all. Still, he does proceed to give his "proofs" for the nonexistence of God, and these really amount to a Sartrean account of how the notion of God ever arose in man's mind.⁵

(h) *In-Itself and For-Itself.* As Sartre considers things, we see that around us are things which exist for me or for others, but do not exist for themselves. Thus, this piece of paper exists for me, not for itself, nor do I exist for it. Yet it does exist, and so he calls it an "in-itself" since it exists there, in itself. I, however, recognize that I not only exist, as an in-itself, but I also exist for-myself, for my own development and self-realization. Hence he divides all beings into "in-itself" and "for-itself." The in-itself is merely *there*; it has no meaning or perfection or order as it is; it is chaotic and can be described as dense and viscous or gooey. Actually these are purely psychological terms which he transfers to reality to describe it as he reacts to it.

Among things one finds moments of consciousness, that is, men, the self. How I come to be, I do not know, but the fact that I shall die and become part of the in-itself shows that my origin was just a momentary fracture of the meaningless in-itself; thus for Sartre man amounts only to an unstable "bubble" of consciousness which erupts without reason on the crust of the in-itself. This means to say that man somehow or other just appears without explanation and unpredictably. Then man projects meaning and order and whatever there is of beauty onto the world itself.⁶

⁵ Hazel Barnes (trans.), J. P. Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* (New York: Philosophical Library Inc., 1956), pp. 80-82, 89-90. Most of Sartre's philosophical ideas are developed in this difficult and cumbersome work (*L'être et le néant* is the original text). More briefly he presents some of his leading ideas in *Existentialism*, translated by B. Frechtman (New York: Philosophical Library Inc., 1947).

⁶ These ideas are difficult to grasp in the works of Sartre, for example in his *La Nausée* or in *Being*, but some help might be found in seeing them in J. Collins, *The Existentialists* (Chicago: Regnery, 1952), pp. 51-63.

(i) *Freedom and Truth.* Man's curse and his privilege is to be free; in fact, for Sartre, man is total freedom and nothing else. His whole life is one of choice, and even if he decides not to choose, that very decision is choice.⁷ His life is meaningless, it is a "useless passion," since he must live vigorously for nothing. There is no God, no rewarder, and man will revert to the nothingness of the in-itself in the end. However, in the meantime he must choose, and he is totally responsible for every choice. Not that this makes any difference, since there is no one to whom he is responsible except himself, and whatever he chooses is right, since there really is no objective right or wrong. Neither is there any such thing as objective truth, since what I choose is my truth, and since I project the values and the meanings which things are to have.

C. Gabriel Marcel

(j) *Man and Subjectivity.* Marcel is so opposed to Sartre's way of thinking that he does not even want to be called an Existentialist lest he be somehow associated with Sartre. However, he has generally been numbered among these writers, so we shall briefly touch on his views, keeping in mind that what particularly interests us is anything related to a theory of knowledge.

Like Kierkegaard, Marcel is an avowed Christian, who feels that in his interpretation of "being" the reality of his faith must play its part. Again we find a thinker who is not very much concerned with analyzing the intrinsic principles of being or with finding "essences" in the traditional sense of that word. Like most Existentialists, he finds man to be the center of his thinking and its point of departure; he seeks the meaning of man, of human life, and of all other things in their relation to man. So again the stress is on subjectivity and on the meaning of the person. Again there is a distrust of the general or the universal, and some profound analyses of psychological states and reactions of the human person. He adds many carefully elaborated studies on what it means to be a man, to possess a body, to have *sensation*, to know *being*, to mention only a few topics.

⁷ Frechtman, *op. cit.*, p. 48. Other ideas expressed in this paragraph are also found scattered throughout this same work.

(k) *Mystery and Problem.* In order to discuss what sort of knowledge I have of being, Marcel makes his famous distinction between "mystery" and "problem." I am facing a "problem" whenever something lies before and independent of me for my dissection or study or measurement, such as holds true in any chemical or physical study. In such investigations I can proceed in a very objective manner and arrive at an accurate formulation of the solution. However, there are some questions which can be asked, where what is being discussed cannot be treated with such complete objectivity, since the questioner cannot in any way separate himself from the data under consideration. The outstanding example of this is "being"; I can ask questions about being, but I can in no way step outside being in order to consider it; hence I can never get a purely "objective" view of being. In fact, the most rewarding way to study being, according to Marcel, is precisely to refuse to "objectify" it, but rather to begin with the self as being. Here then, there is "encroachment" upon the data itself by the examiner, in the sense that what is being examined is as much within me as outside me. As can be seen, Marcel is not here using the term "mystery" in any theological sense, but only to indicate a very special sort of problem. Neither does mystery mean that what is considered is unknowable; in fact the opposite is said to be true: it is a mystery, for example, *being*, *existence*, and *freedom*, because it is so close to and personal to me; it is the light of the intellect knowing, and it pervades all problems and studies. However, our knowledge of being must not be confused with the sort of conceptual knowledge had in our understanding of other things, of problems. Marcel is opposed to the overstress on conceptualization which he feels has been prevalent in philosophy. Mysteries such as *being* and *existence* cannot be conceptualized.

(l) *Participation.* As was said, Marcel's type of analysis stresses the uniqueness of the individual person, and does not so much seek the metaphysical structure of man as the meaning of man and of his activities. Thus for example, in his analysis of sensation, he rejects the interpretation of it as a *message* emitted by a "transmitter" and picked up by a sort of "receiving set," where the senses are looked upon as a sort of receiving station to gather in and interpret messages. Rather, for him sensation means a being-with and a being-in-continuity-with things, or, as he puts it, it is under-

standable only as a way of participation in the world. This view involves the larger one, quite opposed to Sartre, that man is at-home in the world, that his relation should be one of communication with and union with all things, whether they be inanimate or animate, human or divine. The same is seen in respect to the world when you consider that man is body-soul in a unique unity, that he does not "possess" his body in any way similar to the way we "possess" money or an auto. Rather, we are "one" incarnate-spirit, and that oneness involving the body itself is our being at-one with the material world. There is then no hostility or opposition between man and his world, there is rather union and participation and at-homeness.⁸

III • THE ANALYSIS

(a) *Special Emphasis on Man.* Although it must be admitted that each Existentialist differs from the other, and that it is difficult to evaluate them together, still certain basic tendencies or ideas can be pointed out and their implications explicitated.

The first thing to be said is that this strong emphasis on the meaning and role of the individual person is something good and extremely profitable in itself, all the more so as a corrective for the over-conceptualization and the over-systematization which characterizes so much of modern philosophy. The human person does occupy a privileged place in the world in which he lives; his freedom and his creative abilities are the unique source of novelty on earth, and as such he has deserved special treatment.

It is not so much that he had not received such special consideration prior to the Existentialists (the history of thought is full of such special considerations for man), but it must be admitted that more often than not he was studied in the light of categories devised for external reality, and in that sense he was effectively treated very frequently as one "thing" among the entirety of things.

⁸ Most of what has been said is based on Marcel's French works, but one who is interested can find many of the themes in the following works which have been translated into English:

M. Harari (trans.), G. Marcel, *The Philosophy of Existence* (New York: Philosophical Library Inc., 1959); K. Farrar (trans.), G. Marcel, *Being and Having* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1951); R. Hague (trans.), G. Marcel, *The Mystery of Being*, 2 vols. (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1951).

Any such statement, of course, needs much qualification, since a too bald statement can be unfair to so many from Socrates to the present day who sought to study and express the role of man and of his special ethical life. However, what these more recent writers have chosen to call "objectivity" as distinguished from "subjectivity" can generally be said to characterize the over-all treatment previously given.

Moreover, the reaction of the Existentialists against the depersonalization of man wrought by the influence of technocracy, and against the "objective" mentality characteristic of the modern era, which stems from the tremendous advances of the sciences, is a well-founded reaction. This is all the more true because of the influence of those "objective" sciences which treat of man, such as psychology, psychiatry, sociology, and even biochemistry and biophysics. Existentialism recognizes basically that there is something special and unique in man's freedom, and it most clearly explicates what Kant meant when he said that the human person must never be treated as a mere means. So, omitting for the moment any of the exaggerations which may be detectable in their doctrines, we can say that the Existentialists have made a valid protest at least to the extent that they are a warning against the depersonalization of man and a protest against over-conceptualization and exaggerated objectification in the study of man.

(b) *Danger of Subjectivism.* At the same time, so far as knowledge is concerned, there are many dangers which are deserving of consideration in the existentialistic mentality, and they must be honestly and seriously considered. From the point of view of knowledge itself, there is great danger that the notion of "subjectivity" may lead imperceptibly to an outright Subjectivism and to Relativism. If each person is so unique in every way, if, as Sartre insists, he makes his own values, then he makes his own truth. What he decides on for himself and what he freely chooses is good for him, without respect to others; so, too, what he decides has truth-value, and must have that value for him. In this way we have come full circle, if it is taken literally, and we have in contemporary clothing an old exaggeration, which can be associated with the Idealism against which these men so violently reacted. This becomes all the more clear in the philosophy of Sartre when he insists that man projects all meaning and order

onto chaotic matter. So, although his thought does not produce the being of the world from nothing, still it does clothe reality with a meaning which it does not already have even fundamentally.

(c) *Irrationalism*. To put this another way, it is true that for Sartre reality is irrational and meaningless apart from man. In a way he is logically forced to admit this, since there is no God, nor exemplary ideas in the divine Mind, and no source of intelligibility, since this ultimately requires a relation to the divine Mind, and there is no mind but man's. This should mean that being is basically unintelligible, and that sort of thinking has long been typed as Irrationalism. In that context truth cannot mean a correspondence of the mind to what is, since there can be no intelligible reception from outside.

(d) *Knowledge of Natures*. What has been said so far is particularly relevant to Sartre, but taking a synoptic view of those positions indicated, and of others not mentioned, we can see that there is a definite attitude toward human knowledge and its powers implied in their rejection of systems or of any attempt at a system, an attitude that characterizes all of the Existentialists. This is basically a dissatisfaction with the claim that something can be known of human nature in itself and in its fundamental relations; its implication is that what we can know is the individual person only, and what can be said must be limited to the singular, the subjective, the immediately personal. Even those, like Marcel, who praise the work done by the natural sciences and who seem to imply that on some other level there is a validity to be conceded to them seem to say that the same can in no wise be said of man's nature or of our knowledge of it.

Now, it is true that each human person is irrepeatable and irreplaceable, and in that sense each human person is unique. However, there is more to the picture than that. Each of us is a man, endowed with a human nature, which is fundamentally the same in all of us. As we can know something about other natures, so we can know truths about human nature, truths which will hold for men wherever and whenever they are found. As can be seen, the negation just now ascribed to Existentialism and the affirmation of knowledge of human nature we are here insisting on, has an intimate relation to the power of the human mind to abstract and to enunciate universal truths for various natures. That power we

have already vindicated for the human mind; the negation of it is an exaggeration. Recognition of the following truths, which would bring about a balanced attitude, is needed here: (1) Much of my knowledge of self is so intimate and personal that it is not conceptualizable, and yet is true knowledge. (2) Through conceptualization I can and do know much about my human nature and the nature of all men.

(e) *Nominalistic*. So the impatience manifested with systematization in matters touching the human is a modern expression of a nominalistic frame of mind. It would say that each one is so unique that general statements are only so many words which do not touch the reality of the individual person. We must in that case be content with individual bits of knowledge about my individual self, with no possibility of generalizing. Of course it must be admitted that I cannot *be* anything except my individual self; however I can *know* more than that. This anti-system and anti-general tendency and its consequent nominalistic implications seem to be true of every Existentialist, even of those who might explicitly reject them.

(f) *Overstress of Will*. Moreover, there is such emphasis on the role of will and of freedom, even to the belittling of intellectual knowledge itself, that there is also a tone of Voluntarism detectable. That is to say, the role of the will seems to be divorced entirely from knowledge and to be even substituted for knowledge. This is of course intimately linked to the Irrationalism mentioned earlier; what I know is unimportant, and what I freely choose is what is true and valuable and good.

(g) *Meaning Added to Objective Structures*. What has been said here can easily be supplemented by considerations from the points of view of ethics and theodicy, but our concern has been with the implications for a theory of knowledge. If what has been said seems a bit harsh or even exaggerated, we might reflect on the meaning of a remark made by a close friend of Gabriel Marcel, and a man who knows Marcel's thinking as well as anyone else. Fr. Troisfontaines says that:

It would be just as much a pity to neglect rational structure and objective solidity as to neglect subjective analyses and the existential atmosphere. Of the two functions of language, that of suggesting and that of making precise, which culminate in pure poetry or mathematics, existentialism is inclined to confine itself to evocation,

scholasticism excels in definition. The two functions are indispensable to the life of the spirit. What do you get when you separate flesh from bone? A skeleton and a formless mass: two dead things. This is a comparison which should be pondered as much by those who ridicule objectivity as by those who distrust subjectivity.⁹

In a sense it can be said that what is here implied is that no one philosophy can ever claim to have exhausted the real or to have provided all the definitive answers to all questions. The truth is always being discovered, and we should welcome it no matter what source happens to present it—or to present even one aspect of it. Hence, Fr. Troisfontaines says that in Scholasticism we are provided with a basic core of truths, that we are led to a gradual knowledge of natures and of relationships, that through it we come to know basic structures and constitutive principles, and much more of everlasting value. However, there is a tone of cold-blooded objectivity to it all, there is a scientific and rational analysis and proof, there is an outline which while valid can stand much continual filling in. And that is one of the things which Existentialism can do with its insights and its probing descriptions and analyses of human experience and meaning. He means that it can put a bit of flesh on the bones of the principles and basic truths. However, those analyses must be done in the light of those basic truths. Truth cannot contradict truth; even though it can be viewed from many sides. Scholasticism establishes the fact of freedom; Existentialism can show what freedom means in concrete situations. Scholasticism can show the intrinsic principles of matter and form in things, and of the composite nature of man, including his spiritual soul; Existentialism can describe what this means in particular situations, or meditate on what it means to be “incarnate,” or to be in touch with things by sensation or intellection. There can be a complementarity in the treatment, and when there is opposition, the source of error or exaggeration must be discovered.

IV • SUMMARY OF THE ANALYSIS

(a) Existentialism's emphasis on the special place occupied by man in the world, its stress on subjectivity as distinguished from

⁹ M. Jarrett-Kerr, C. R. (trans.), Roger Troisfontaines, S. J., *Existentialism and Christian Thought* (London: A. & C. Black, 1949), p. 39.

objectivity in the study of man, and its opposition to the depersonalization of man in modern times are points of value worth stressing. Cf. *Analysis (a)*.

(b) There is, however, a danger of falling imperceptibly from subjectivity into Subjectivism; and where each person is seen as so unique that he makes or creates his own values, there is danger of a sort of Idealism. Cf. *Analysis (b)*.

(c) For Sartre, since there is no Divine Mind, there is no ground for intelligibility, and hence there is present a sort of Irrationalism. Cf. *Analysis (c)*.

(d) In the general rejection of systems, there is implied a negation of the mind's power to know something about natures. There is lacking a balance between the uniqueness of each one's personal knowledge of self and the possibility of some general knowledge of natures, even of human nature. Cf. *Analysis (d)*.

(e) This exclusion of general knowledge, which is found in all the Existentialists, points to a nominalistic view of knowledge. Cf. *Analysis (e)*.

(f) The role of will and of human freedom is at times made to be the all-important point. What I freely choose is good and true. This also is a sort of Irrationalism. Cf. *Analysis (f)*.

(g) Granted these dangers as existing in Existentialism as it has concretely been presented, it may still be admitted that the descriptions and analyses of human nature and of its meaning in respect to the world in which man lives can play a complementary role in philosophy. They can add a bit of fullness to the consideration of fundamental principles and of the intrinsic principles which constitute composite beings. In particular, their emphases on the uniqueness of man's role can be welcomed by and given a solid foundation in keeping with the views of a *philosophia perennis*. Cf. *Analysis (g)*.

V • THE STATEMENT IN BRIEF

Existentialism stresses the unique role of man and of his freedom; however, it tends to overstress singularity and choice, and so leans towards nominalistic and irrationalistic views.

VI • DEFINITIONS

Existentialism: From Fr. Troisfontaines we can borrow the following definition: Existentialism is a passionate return of the individual to his own freedom, in order in the unfolding of its processes to extract the significance of his being.¹⁰

¹⁰ Jarrett-Kerr, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

VII • SUGGESTED READINGS

Although the literature in this field is vast, the following are suggested because they are brief yet instructive:

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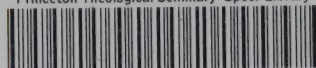
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